

A  
T R E A T I S E  
Concerning the  
C A U S E S  
O F T H E  
Present Corruption  
O F  
C H R I S T I A N S,  
And the R E M E D I E S thereof.

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In Two P A R T S.

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P A R T I.

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The Third Edition Corrected.

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*Charles Lord Maynard*



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To the Right Reverend

GILBERT

Lord Bishop of *Sarum*,

Chancellor of the Most Noble Order  
of the Garter.

*My Lord,*

**T**HE Treatise I now humbly offer  
to Your Lordship in *English*, has  
met with a very great and general  
Applause in *French*. A Second E-  
dition of it was desir'd in less than two  
Months after the first, and it is already  
translated into more Languages than one:  
But that which ought to weigh more than  
any other Commendation, is the high Va-  
lue Your Lordship sets upon this Book; for  
if the most accomplish'd Writers are the  
best Judges of other Mens Works, there

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lies no Appeal from Your Lordship's Judgment concerning the worth of this. I have heard Your Lordship deliver Your Opinion of this Performance in a very particular manner, and reckon it among the best Books that this Age has produc'd, and that, in all respects, both for Piety and Learning, good Sense and true Judgment.

Your Lordship thought fit that so valuable a Work should be put into *English*. You were pleas'd, my Lord, to commit this Translation to my Care; and I could wish I had been as well qualify'd for that Office, as I was desirous to discharge it to Your Lordship's Satisfaction. But I am conscious of my want of Abilities in this as well as in all other things; and I fear the Work of the Reverend and Worthy Author, who honours me with some share in his Friendship, has lost several Beauties and Graces by passing thro my Hands. However, my Lord, I have render'd his Sense as faithfully as I could, and that is all I would be accountable for to the Reader: for if, among that Variety of nice and tender Subjects which are touch'd here, the Author mixes any thing which does not sute with every Body's Notions, it is his Province, and not mine, to defend it. He lives in one of the remotest Countries in which the Protestant Religion is receiv'd, and  
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in what he writes, he had his own Neighbourhood chiefly in View; so that his main Design was to correct things within his reach, to which the State of that Church, which is now in eminent danger, led him. But I leave to Your Lordship to judg, whether that which he thought proper for his own Church, may not be likewise of good use to others.

And now, my Lord, I do gladly embrace this Opportunity to make a publick Acknowledgment of the extraordinary Obligations Your Lordship has laid upon me. A Post in the Service of the Church is not the greatest Favour I have receiv'd at Your Hands; I reckon my self much more beholden to Your Lordship for the benefit of Your Example and Instructions, which I have enjoy'd several Years in your Family. But here I must make a full stop, and how much soever I am inclin'd to say a great deal upon the Subject, yet I know Your Lordship too well to venture on it; for whatever I may think, I know I must say nothing.

The best return I can make for the large Experience I have had of Your Lordship's Kindness and Generosity, is to put up my most hearty Prayers for the long Continuance of Your Lordship's Life and Happiness, and for the lasting Prof-



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perity of Your Family; this I do, my Lord, as truly as I profess my self, with all possible respect,

Your Lordship's

most Humble,

most Dutiful, and

most Obligated Servant,

*Charles Mutel.*

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T H E  
Author's P R E F A C E

**W**E have reason to wonder at the great Corruptions that at present are to be found among Christians. The Religion they profess does chiefly tend to sanctify Men, and to purge the World from Corruption and Vice; and one would think it should produce that Effect, since it affords such a clear Light, such powerful Motives, and such effectual Helps to Holiness. Notwithstanding all this, whoever enquires into the Notions and Manners of Christians, must have no great share of Sincerity or Judgment, if he does not acknowledg that Religion has but little Influence upon their Minds, and that there is an amazing Contradiction between their Lives and the Rules of Christianity. This Corruption is so evident and so generally confess'd, that I need not stand to prove it.

Taking it then for granted that Christians live in a great neglect of their Duties, it is natural to enquire into the Causes of this Corruption, and to consider what Remedies should be apply'd to it. This is what I intend to do in this Treatise, in hopes that such an Enquiry will not be altogether unuseful.

For, First, it may contribute to maintain the

## The Preface.

*Honour and the Truth of the Christian Religion, and to confute Infidels and Libertines, who are apt to despise it, because its Precepts are little practis'd, If Religion, say they, be true and divine, how comes it to pass that it has so little Efficacy, and that there appears so much Disorder and Licentiousness among the Professors of it? To undeceive such Men, and to infuse into them a greater respect for Religion, it is of very great importance to discover the Causes of the decay of Piety, and to shew, that if Men are corrupted, it is not because Christ's Religion is insufficient to introduce Vertue and Order into the World, but that this Evil flows from some other Cause; and that if Christians did what they might and ought to do, true Piety would not be so uncommon as it is amongst them.*

*A second Advantage which may be reap'd from this Enquiry, is this; it will appear by it, that how great soever the Corruption may be, it is not however, as many imagine, past remedy: which Imagination is a most dangerous Prejudice; while Men look on it as impossible to stem the Tide of Corruption, and to re-establish Order and Purity of Manners in the World, they do not so much as attempt it; they let things go on at the same rate, and so the Disorder increases and spreads farther. It cannot be deny'd but that the Corruption is great, general and inveterate; but God forbid we should look upon it as an incurable Disease: The Fountains of it may easily be discover'd, and it is not impossible to stop them. I hope this will be acknowledg'd*  
by

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by those who shall attentively, and without prepossession, consider what is propos'd in this Work.

Thirdly, There is no means more likely to remove this Corruption, than to cut off the Occasions of it; that is the surest as well as the most compendious Method. One of the main Reasons why so many excellent Books, design'd to inspire Men with a Love of Religion and Piety, have not all the effect that might be expected from them, is, that the Authors do not sufficiently observe the general Causes of the Depravation of Manners. It is to little purpose to deplore the Corruption of the Age, to exhort Men, and to give them fine Lessons of Morality: The Work of Reformation cannot be much advanc'd, as long as the Evil is not taken in its Cause, and as long as such Principles and Abuses continue among Christians, as are, and will always be, Obstacles to the Progress of the Gospel.

Lastly, I consider'd that this Matter had not yet been thorowly handled by any Author, at least that I know of. Of those who have touch'd upon it in their Books, some have confin'd themselves to Considerations purely Moral, and others to Theological Reflections, upon the Errors which are in vogue, or upon the Controversies which divide Christians; but they have omitted many things which seem essential, no doubt because they did not intend to treat this Subject purposely, or because they did not take a View of the whole Extent of it.

As



## The Preface.

*As these Considerations have made me wish for a long while, that, among so many able Men who write about Religion, some might undertake so important a Subject; so they had determin'd me to publish these Essays upon the Causes of Corruption, hoping that others will apply themselves to the full Discussion of those Matters which are here but imperfectly hinted at.*

*But that the Scope of this Treatise may be the better understood, and that no body may expect that in it, which, according to the Scheme I form'd to my self, ought not to have a place here, I shall acquaint the Reader with one thing, which he may perhaps have foreseen, from what has been already said.*

*I do not propose to my self to handle this Matter in the way of the Divinity Schools. No Man therefore ought to wonder if I say nothing of the State in which all Men are born, nor of that Inclination to Vice which is observ'd in them. For tho this is the first Original of Corruption; yet certainly this Corruption would be much less, if Christians did use the means which God affords them to overcome it, and if there were not other Sources which feed and strengthen that vicious Propensity. Besides, I do not consider Corruption in general, as it is common to all Mankind, but I enquire into the Causes of the Corruption of Christians in particular. Neither do I design to write a moral Treatise; so that it must not be expected that I should discourse of Self-Love and Pride, and of all the other Passions which*  
are

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are the ordinary Occasions of Mens Sins ; or that I should trace out all the particular Causes of every Sin. This would carry me too far, and such things have been often examin'd. I therefore apply my self only to the general Causes, and I manage the Matter thus.

I divide this Work into two Parts, because the Causes of Corruption may be of two Sorts. I shall call those of the first Sort Particular or Internal, because they are within us, and to be found in every particular Man that lives ill: Those of the second Sort, which are more general, I name External, because they proceed rather from certain outward Circumstances, and from the Unhappiness of the Times, than from the Fault of particular Persons.

The Causes I shall treat of, in the First Part, are no other but the ill Dispositions in which most Christians are, and which hinder their applying themselves to Piety: And of these I shall observe Nine.

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|--|---|
| <p>I. Ignorance.</p> <p>II. Prejudices and False Notions concerning Religion.</p> <p>III. Some Opinions and Maxims which are us'd to authorize Corruption.</p> <p>IV. The Abuse of Holy Scripture.</p> | <p>V. A false Modesty.</p> <p>VI. The delaying Repentance.</p> <p>VII. Man's Sloth and Negligence in Matters of Religion.</p> <p>VIII. Worldly Business.</p> <p>IX. Mens particular Callings.</p> |
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The Causes to be consider'd in the Second Part, are these Seven.

I, The

## The Preface.

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| I. The State of the Church,<br>and of Religion in general. | IV. The Defects of Christian Princes and Magistrates. |
| II. The Want of Discipline.                                | V. Education.   |
| III. The Defects of the Clergy.                            | VI. Example and Custom.                               |
|  | VII. Books.   |

*I declare here that, in discoursing upon these Sources, I do not mean to tax all Christians without exception; so when I speak of Ignorance, and of Prejudices commonly receiv'd, knowing and learned Men are excepted: And when I observe certain Defects in the State of the Church, and of Religion, in Discipline, in Clergymen, or in Christian Magistrates, I suppose those Faults obtain more in some Places than in others. In short, whoever should apply what is said in this Treatise to all sorts of Persons and Churches, would certainly mistake my Design.*

*And now I must desire those, who may chance to see this Book, to examine seriously what I propose in it. No Lover of Truth or Religion can refuse his Attention to a Subject of this Nature. But I hope it will be more particularly welcome to Churchmen and Divines, who are call'd by their Function to set themselves against Corruption, and to endeavour all they can to promote Piety and the Glory of God.*

*To conclude; I heartily implore his Blessing upon this Work, who put it into my Hand to set about it, and who is my Witness with what Design and Intention I publish it.*

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P A R T I.

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C A U S E I.  
I G N O R A N C E.

**W**HEN a Man thinks of the Cause  
Causes of that Corruption I.  
which over-runs the Chris-  
tian World, the first which  
offers it self to his Mind is Ignorance, and  
therefore I shall begin with that.

Our



Part I. Our Notions and Knowledg are the first Principles of our Actions; we can never love a thing, or adhere to it, when it is not at all, or when it is but imperfectly known to us: Supposing then that Men are ignorant, or very little instructed in Religion, there is no wonder that they should be corrupt, for they must of necessity be so: On the other hand, when they appear to be extreamly corrupt, we may conclude that they want Instruction. I do not deny but that Corruption proceeds sometimes from the Wickedness of the Heart, which resists the Light of the Understanding, and that Men frequently act against their Knowledg. But it may safely be said, that if Christians were well instructed, they would not be so corrupt, and that wherever an extraordinary Corruption is visible, there is likewise a great deal of Ignorance.

This is confirm'd by the Scripture, and by God's Conduct in the establishing the Christian Religion. When the Apostles speak of those disorders wherein the Heathens liv'd before their Conversion, they ascribe them to the Darkness of their Minds.

\* *The Gentiles (says St. Paul) have their Understanding darken'd, being alienated from the Life of God thro the Ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their Heart.* The

\* Eph. IV. 18.

same



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same Apostle calls the Times which preceded the Coming of Christ, *the Times of Ignorance*. And the first Thing which God did to change the Face of the World, and to rescue it from Corruption, was to dispel the Clouds of their Ignorance, and to enlighten them with the Knowledge of himself, by the preaching of the Gospel. Cause I.

Altho Christians cannot be charg'd with so gross an Ignorance as that of the Heathens, yet they fall very short of that Knowledge they ought to have; and it must be confess'd, that for the most part they live in shameful and deplorable Ignorance. This is the Reason why Piety is so much wanting among them, and why they are so deprav'd and vicious; which is the Thing I will endeavour to make appear.

In order to this, as the Christian Religion may be reduc'd to these Two Heads,

*First*, The Knowledge of the Truth;

*Secondly*, The Practice of Holiness:

It is fit to enquire, Whether, with respect to these, Christians are furnish'd with necessary Information. I shall make it appear that they are very little instructed,

I. In that which concerns the Truths of Religion. And,

II. In

Part I. II. In what relates to Manners, and to  
the Duties of Christianity.

The Reflections I shall bestow upon both these Heads will, I hope, clearly prove, that among those vast multitudes of Men who profess themselves Christians, there are very few who are well acquainted with their Religion. From whence it will be natural to conclude, that they must needs be very corrupt.

I. To begin with the Knowledge of the Truths of Christianity, we must distinguish two sorts of Truths in Religion; the General, and the Particular Truths. The General Truths are those upon which the whole of Religion is founded; such as these, that there is a God, that the Bible is a Divine Book, and that the Christian Religion is true. By particular Truths I mean the various Doctrines which Religion contains, and which are the Parts of it; but which at the same time depend upon the General Truths as upon their Principle: the Doctrine of the Sacraments, of Justification, and many others are of this number. Now let us consider the Ignorance of Christians in reference to these two sorts of Truths.

1. Every Man, who makes use of his Reason, may easily apprehend, that the general Truths are the most important; that they are those of which one ought chiefly to be per-

persuaded; and that without these general Cause Truths, the particular ones would be useless, I. nay, would not be so much as Truths. To enquire, Whether there be any Sacraments, or how a Man can be justify'd; one must believe first, that there is a God, and a Religion: For if I am not convinc'd of the Existence of God, and of the Truth of Religion, it would signify little to me, whether or not there were any Sacraments, and all the time I should employ in the Prosecution of this Enquiry, would be lost.

This first Reflection does already discover to us an essential and capital Defect. A great many Christians want Instruction concerning the Principles and Foundations of Christianity; they do not sufficiently consider the Certainty and Importance of it. Their Knowledge of Religion does seldom go further than the particular Truths of it, and does not reach the general. This is so common a Fault, that it may be observ'd even in those whose Profession it is to study Religion, and to teach it to others. Some have spent the best part of their Lives in the Study of Divinity, or in expounding the Scripture, who never seriously examin'd the Arguments for the Truth of Christianity, or the Divinity of the Scripture. Some are Masters of the principal Controversies which divide Christians, who would stand mute if they were call'd back to the first Elements of Religion; and if they were to

B maintain



**Part I.** maintain against an Infidel, that there is a Religion, or that the Christian Religion is true. The People enter yet less than the Divines into the Examination of the general Truths; and there are very few who either attend to them, or indeed believe them as they ought.

And yet the whole of Religion depends upon a firm Persuasion concerning the Principles of Faith; it is that which renders the particular Truths effectual to Salvation, and which begets Piety and the Love of Virtue. When a Man is persuaded that Religion proposes nothing but what is certain, he immediately receives with Reverence whatsoever it teaches; he feels an Inclination in himself to observe its Precepts, and he believes a Judgment and another Life, as if he saw them before his Eyes. Such is the Efficacy of a true Faith, and of a steady Persuasion about fundamental Truths. But without this Persuasion it is very hard, not to say impossible, to adhere sincerely to Religion, and to perform the Duties of it: And this is the constant Source of the Corruption of Christians.

It may perhaps be objected, that all Christians receive the general Truths of their Creeds, and that these are not question'd but by Pagans and Atheists. Upon which I shall make two Reflections.

1. It is but too true, that in the Point of Religion, there is, at this day, a great Number

Number of Persons who entertain very loose Cause  
Opinions, and that do at least border upon I.  
Atheism. These pernicious Tenets are  
spread wider than some People think; not  
only the Libertines are infected with them,  
but even the Common People. All the pro-  
fane Men and Deists are not to be found at  
Courts, in Armies, or among the Learned;  
there are some in Towns, among the Vul-  
gar, and even among Country Clowns. If  
we examine a little the Discourses and Ap-  
prehensions of Men, especially of those  
whose Life is irregular; if we do but begin  
to reason with them and press them, we  
may soon perceive the Principles of Incredu-  
lity and Atheism in many of them. It will  
be found that they are not thorowly per-  
suaded that there is a God, and another  
Life; or that if they do not proceed to that  
Degree of Impiety, which attacks directly  
the very Foundations of Religion, they har-  
bour at least this Fancy, that God doth not  
narrowly observe Mens Deportment; that  
he will not be so severe as to damn them for  
some Sins they have committed, and that  
there is no such great harm in gratifying  
one's Passions, and living at the usual rate of  
the World. These and the like Sentiments  
are general enough, and yet they lead the  
streight way to Deism, and tend plainly to  
the Subversion of Religion. It would be  
therefore highly necessary, in order to root  
out such dangerous Errors, carefully to es-  
tablish

**Part I.** establish these great Truths; That there is a God, that this God speaks to us in his Word, and that whatever the Gospel tells us of another Life, is most certain. This, I say, would be altogether needful, if it were but for the Instruction of those I have now mention'd; and their Number is greater than is commonly imagin'd.

2. We may take notice, that tho Christians profess to believe the Truths of their Religion, yet that Belief is not lively and strong enough in them all. It is beyond all question, that most Christians are so only because they were engag'd by their Birth in the Profession of Christianity; but that after all, they know very little of the Truth and Divinity of it. They would in like manner have been Jews or Pagans, if they had been born in Judaism or Paganism; so that, properly speaking, they cannot be said to have Faith: for Faith is a Persuasion; to believe, is to be persuaded; and 'tis impossible to believe a thing right without Reason or Examination. That which is call'd Faith, is commonly nothing else but a confus'd and general Opinion, which makes but very slight Impressions upon the Heart and Mind; but true Faith is a greater rarity among Christians than we are aware of. Now as Faith is the only Principle of Piety, so a bad Life does chiefly spring from want of Faith, and from Incredulity. And there are two sorts of Infidels; some deny and re-  
ject



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2f  
Cause  
I.

ject Divine Truths ; others do not quite deny them, but they doubt and believe but weakly. The Infidels who deny the Fundamentals of Religion, are not many ; but the Number of those who doubt, and are not well persuaded, is very great.

This discovers to us the Reason why Men, who are acquainted with the Divine Truths, and profess to believe them, do yet act quite contrary to the Dictates of Faith and Religion. There seems to be in their Proceeding a manifest Contradiction : It is a thing wonder'd at, that People who believe a God, and a Religion, should live as if there was neither God nor Religion. Upon this we are apt to say, that Sinners are not consistent with themselves ; and as if it were impossible to reconcile their Practice with their Belief, we cry out, that the depth of Man's Heart is unsearchable. But there is no such wonder in the Case, and the Proceeding of bad Christians is not always so contradictory, as it seems to be. I confess, that Men sin sometimes against the Convictions of their own Consciences, and that some who want not Knowledg, do yet live very ill.

This may proceed from Inconsideration, from the Violence of their Passions, from too great a regard to their Temporal Interest, from the flattering Hope of Pardon, or some such Principle. But for the most part, Men act consonantly and suitably to their Be-



**Part I.** *w* *w* lief; and it is but seldom, that in the Conduct of their Lives, they behave themselves contrary to the Sentiments and Principles that possess them. We suppose that bad Christians believe the Truths of Religion, and in that we are mistaken. Many of them want Faith, and are not fully convinc'd of those Truths. Is it to be imagin'd, that so many Persons who live in Sin, who make Conscience of nothing, and who violate every minute the Rules of their Duty, should be thorowly perswaded there is a God who sees them, and to whom they are to give an Account? From all this, I conclude, That the Ignorance of the general Truths of Religion, is one of the principal Sources of Corruption.

Some will say, That these Truths need not be prov'd, and that they are of the number of those first Principles, which are taken for granted, because they are imprinted on the Hearts of all Men. But this Objection is easily answer'd by what has been said just now. I own that the Ideas and Principles of Religion carry in them a natural Evidence, inasmuch as they are demonstrable from Reason and Conscience; and because there are Principles in Men, by the help of which they may arrive at the Knowledge of the Truths of Religion. But these Principles and Ideas have been in some measure stifled in many, either thro ill Education, or worldly Business, or Vice, or some other Cause;

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Cause  
I.

Cause; so that they feel the Force and Evidence of them but imperfectly; and some have no sense at all of them. Upon this account it is necessary to excite and enlighten those Ideas, to explain and establish those Principles. I acknowledg further, That some parts of those Proofs, upon which Religion is built, lie open to all Mens Eyes; but yet the ignorant, and those who are taken up with other Objects, do not observe them: They should therefore be made to attend to them, just as we make stupid and heedless People take notice of the Beauty of a Palace, or the Skill of an Artist in some curious Workmanship, which would otherwise pass unobserv'd by them. However the Opinion of those who pretend, that the General Truths ought not to be prov'd, is contrary to the Holy Scripture, which teaches us to Reason upon the Principles of Religion, and to search into the Proofs of them; where, in order to convince Men that there is an Almighty and Infinitely Good God, it proposes to them, the Beauties and Wonders which shine in his Works, and exhorts them to the Consideration of them. This may be seen in the Book of *Job*; in the XIXth and CIVth *Psal.* *Rom.* I. 19, 20. and in many other Places.

3. It may further be said, That the Proof of General Truths, is too difficult for the Common People, and that the Learned only are capable of such a Discussion. I grant,

Part I. that all sorts of Persons are not able to comprehend all that has been writ upon these Matters; and therefore I do not pretend, that it is impossible to have a true Faith without entring into the Detail of all these Proofs, and without following, with the utmost strictness, all the deep and abstracted Reasonings, which have been us'd to prove the Existence of God, or the Truth of the Christian Religion: I think rather those Matters ought to be treated with great Discretion, especially in Sermons. It would be a great piece of imprudence to muster up, in a Publick Discourse, all the Objections of Atheists, or the Subtleties of Libertines; these ought to be refer'd to Private Conferences. Those, who speak to the People, must take heed, lest, by disputing and speculating too much, they render the Fundamental Truths problematical, and raise Scruples in mens Minds. They ought to build upon this Principle, That Men are carry'd by a common and natural Inclination to believe the Existence of God, to acknowledge a difference betwixt Good and Evil, and to own Providence, and the other Truths of Religion; but for all that, it may be very useful and necessary to confirm those Truths, to set them in the clearest Light, and to convince the People of them.

As to what is said, That the Proofs of the Principles of Religion are not sutable to the Peoples Capacity: I answer, That most of those

those Proofs are such, that there is no need Cause  
of being either Learned, or a Divine, to be I.  
affected with them. We ought to suppose  
here, that the more important any Truth is,  
the clearer and the easier the Proofs of it are.  
I do not speak of all Truths; there are some  
that are most certain, whose Proofs are dif-  
ficult, and above the reach of common Un-  
derstandings; such are many Metaphysical  
Truths, and Mathematical Demonstrations:  
but at the same time, the knowledg of those  
Truths is not necessary, and a Man without  
danger may be ignorant of them. I speak  
now only of those Truths which it concerns  
every Person to know, and which are of ge-  
neral usefulness and necessity: These are al-  
ways clear and easily prov'd. And this, by  
the by, ought on the one hand, to make us  
admire the Wisdom and Goodness of God,  
who has so well provided for the Necessities  
of Men; and on the other hand, to set  
bounds to our Curiosity, and to fortify our  
Faith against those Doubts, which might  
start up in our Minds, by reason of so many  
things which we are ignorant of.

As therefore, of all Truths, none are of  
greater Consequence, or of a more intire  
Certainty than those which Religion de-  
pends upon; so the Proof of those Truths  
ought to be simple, evident and suited to all  
Mens Capacities. Thus, when in order to  
prove the Being of a God, we alledg, for  
instance, the State and Order in which the  
World



**Part I.** World subsists; when we shew that the World cannot be eternal, and that things had a beginning; when we establish the Inspiration of Scripture by the Prophecies it contains, which were undoubtedly written before their Accomplishment; when we prove the Truth of the Christian Religion by the Truth of Matters of Fact and History, and demonstrate that if the Facts, upon which Religion is founded, are not certain, there is no such thing as Certainty in the World, in respect of things that are past; and that if the Testimony of the Apostles is rejected, there are no Witnesses or Historians who may not be rejected upon better grounds; when we confirm the sacred History by the concurring Testimony of Pagan Writers, and by the most antient and the most unquestionable Monuments which past Ages can afford; when we reflect upon the manner in which the Christian Religion was planted in the World, and upon the Alteration it has made in it; when we insist upon the Characters of Truth, Sincerity and Divinity, which are observable in the Scripture: In short, when we take Religion to pieces, and make Men see and feel, that its Doctrines, its Precepts, its Promises, and its Threatnings have nothing in them that is absurd or bad, or contrary to our natural Apprehensions; nothing but what perfectly agrees with sound Reason, and the Sentiments of our own

own Consciences; and nothing but what is  
advantageous to particular Persons, and to  
Societies : When, I say, we urge these  
Proofs and others like them, and have the  
Art of proposing them in a clear and judi-  
cious Method, 'tis certain that they contain  
nothing that is very difficult. These are  
the clearest and the strongest Proofs that can  
be us'd in a Subject of this nature; and  
the Arguments which are made use of to  
establish these Proofs are, for the most part,  
so natural, and so conform to the Ideas of  
our Minds, and to the Principles of com-  
mon Sense, that there are few even of the  
Vulgar who may not apprehend them; if  
not perfectly, and in their whole extent,  
which is reserv'd to Men of a larger Capa-  
city, yet so far at least as to be sufficiently  
sensible of their Force.

If then Difficulties and Obscurities are to  
be met with in the Discussion of the Princi-  
ples of Religion; it is because this Matter is  
neglected, and the People are little inform'd.  
But if the same care had been taken to in-  
struct Christians in the fundamental Truths  
of Religion, which was bestow'd upon ex-  
plaining and clearing particular ones, they  
would have another kind of persuasion than  
they have of the Truth of Religion. These  
great and sublime Truths have, without  
comparison, more suitableness and affinity  
with the Nature of Men, and the Sentiments  
of their Hearts, than many obscure, diffi-  
cult

Cause.

I.

**Part I.** cult and less necessary things, which yet have been effectually taught them.

4. But against this Experience may possibly be objected: It may be said, That there are Christians, who most certainly have Piety, and yet did never meditate much upon the Foundations of Christianity. I answer, That 'tis not conceivable, how a Man should be a pious Christian, without being persuaded of the Truth of his Religion. For at this rate Piety would be but mere Conceit and Enthusiasm; and we must say, notwithstanding all that Scripture and Reason tells us to the contrary, that Men are Christians without Knowledge or Reason. It cannot be otherwise, but that good Men must have been convinc'd of the Truths of the Gospel, and have had a lively sense, that these are the most certain and the most important of all Truths. If we enquire what Principle it is which produces Piety in the Hearts of the most simple People, we shall find 'tis an unmovable Persuasion, That there is a God, a Judgment, a Heaven and a Hell; which Persuasion is necessarily founded upon some of the Proofs I have hinted at.

I grant, which no doubt will be objected to me, That in many this Persuasion is not clear enough, and that it is not the result of a particular Examination; but this does not lessen the force of my Argument: For tho' the Persuasion of good Men should not be so clear and so well grounded as it might be,

be, yet it does not follow but that it is sincere: A Man may be convinc'd of a Truth, tho he does not discover all the Certainty and all the Proofs of it, and tho he is not able to answer all the Objections against it. So that still it is true, that there is no Religion, without the Belief of the general Truths of it. After all, we must acknowledge, That there are good Men, who are not so well instructed upon this Head as it were to be wish'd: And this defect of Instruction, this imperfection of their Faith, is one of the main Causes of the defect and imperfection of their Piety. Thus we may frequently observe in their Conduct such Weaknesses and Opinions as do not agree with the pure Light of Faith, and with the exactness of the Rules of the Gospel. This is part of the Unhappiness we lament, and of that Corruption of which we seek the Causes. But no Man will dispute, but that if the same Persons had more Instruction, they would carry Virtue much farther than they do. The degree of Piety, does ordinarily follow the degree of Faith; where there is no Faith, there is no Piety; and where Faith is weak and faint, Piety is languid and defective. This is the general State and Character of Christians at this time; either downright Impiety, or a Piety that is both feeble and imperfect.

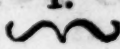
5. In the last place, some will perhaps object here, That Incredulity is the Effect rather



**Part I.** ther than the Cause of Corruption; and that Atheism does not produce Corruption, but Corruption Atheism. To this I say, that these two things do mutually uphold and support each other. Many fall into Infidelity, because their Hearts are vitiated, their licentious way of living takes them off from enquiring into Religion, and hinders their believing of Divine Truths. But it is not less certain, that one of the great Causes of the Disorders of Christians, is, that either they do not believe at all, or that they believe weakly and confusedly; and this cannot be reasonably contested.

**II.** Here is then the first and the principal Defect, That Men are not sufficiently instructed in the general Truths and Principles of Christianity. I said that the particular Truths, and the Parts of Religion were better known; which does not imply but that in this respect too, Ignorance is very great and general.

**i.** I shall not scruple to say, That there are prodigious Numbers of People, who scarce have any Knowledg at all of the Doctrines of Religion. If all Christians were oblig'd to render an account of their Faith, if they were examin'd upon the Articles of their Belief, or the main Facts related in Sacred History, there would appear in most of them such an astonishing Ignorance, or such confus'd and intricate Ideas, that one would hardly think them more knowing

knowing than if they liv'd in the darkness Cause  
of Heathenism. And what Religion, what I.  
Piety can we look for among such Men? 

But besides this gross and palpable Ignorance, there are several defects of Instruction to be observ'd, even in those who have, or fancy that they have more Knowledge than others. I shall particularly take notice of these two.

1. Those who exceed the ordinary degree of Knowledge, have yet often but a false kind of Light; either they do not know those Truths which they should know, or else they know them not aright. They apply themselves to things which are not essential to Christianity, or which are less considerable than others which they do not study. Thus in all Christian Societies, Instruction is commonly plac'd in the knowledge of the Doctrines and Opinions particular to every one's own Sect and Party. Whoever is able to debate those Points, and is skill'd in Controversy, is said to understand his Religion. These Matters may perhaps have their use; but there are other things which Men are more concern'd to know, because they are more conducing to Piety, and yet they are almost constantly neglected. The occasion of this Error is, that the various Importance of the Truths of Religion is not duly weigh'd, and that Religion is not study'd in an orderly Method. Very few Persons distinguish

**Part I.** I. guish between the more and the less necessary Things, between the most useful Subjects, and those which are of little Edification. Most Men study Religion without Rule, and to no purpose, and so run out upon many unprofitable Subjects. That which is call'd Learning in Divinity, or Knowledg of Religion, is frequently nothing else but a heap of Notions, which have no influence upon Piety, or respect to Mens Salvation. It is but a confus'd Medley, wherein the least necessary things are blended without choice and distinction, with the most important. I do not speak here of the perplext and unaccurate Ideas which Men often have about these matters; I pass by the false Reasonings, which are sometimes us'd to establish the Truths of Christianity, as well as those Mists which the School-Divinity has cast upon the Gospel: I do only observe, That the knowledg which most Men have of Religion, is not very fit to make them sensible of the beauties of it; so that when all is done, it is no wonder it should seem to many an obscure, crabbed, unpleasant and intricate Science, and have so little effect upon mens Minds.

2. The other fault is, That Men content themselves with bare Instruction, or with the simple knowledg of the Christian Truths, while they are ignorant of their use. If they do but know in an Historical manner, what is believ'd by Christians, and are able to reason

son about it, and to discern Truth from Error, they think themselves sufficiently instructed. But these Instructions do not reach the Heart. Among that small number of Persons who have some Knowledge, there are but few who consider that this Knowledge is to be directed to a Holy Life, as to its proper end and intendment; and they are fewer yet who actually direct it to that end, and make it subservient to the reforming of their Lives. And so it comes to pass, that a great many of those who are best acquainted with the Truths of Religion, have yet but an imperfect and barren Knowledge of it, and that with all their attainments, they live still in the darkness of Corruption and Vice.

II. Hitherto we have consider'd Ignorance with relation to the Truths and Doctrines, which the Christian Faith embraces: Let us now view this Ignorance with respect to the Duties which Christianity prescribes. Upon this second Head we shall discover yet a greater Ignorance than upon the first. For after all, something may be done, when we are only to infuse into Men some Knowledge of Truths and Doctrines. It is usual enough to see very ill Men, who in this regard are not destitute of Light. But it is much harder to instruct them in the Duties of Holiness. We may apply here these

C words



**Part I.** words of our Saviour; \* *Men love Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd.* The Maxims of the Gospel and the Rules of its Morality condemn Sinners, and therefore they do not care to be informed about them. Those who love the World and their Sins, are glad if they can enjoy the sweets of these without Disturbance and Interruption: And therefore they will not enquire much into the Moral Precepts of Jesus Christ; they are loth to come at such a Knowledge as would disclose to them the Turpitude of Vice, and breed disquiet and remorse in them. Ignorance begets Security: The more ignorant a Man is, the fewer Stings he feels in his Conscience, the more Pleasure he takes in his Sin. The very shadow of Evil frights a well-instructed Christian; but Crime it self does not daunt one who is ignorant: He does not hear within himself those Alarms or Reproaches, which are either the Preservatives against Sin, or the Remedies of it.

From this it may be judg'd already, that Men are generally very little instructed in what concerns Manners. But that we may the better understand how great the Ignorance is in this matter, it must be observ'd,

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\* John III. 19, 20.

That whoever will perform the Duties of Religion, must be persuaded of their Necessity, and acquainted with their Nature. I. One cannot imagine how they can be practised by a Man, who either does not know them, or does not think them necessary. This is the plain Reason why Men do so little addict themselves to Piety; they know neither its Necessity nor its Nature.

I. As the Foundation of Faith is the belief of the truth and certainty of those Facts and Doctrines which Religion proposes; so the Ground-work of Piety is, to be persuaded of the necessity of the Duties which Christianity requires: Without this Persuasion, it is impossible for Men to resign up themselves to the practice of Virtue. Now one would think that all Christians should be fully convinc'd of this necessity. For if there is any certain Truth in Christianity, it is this; That the practice of good Works is necessary. Good Works do so immediately belong to the design and the essence of Religion, that it falls to the Ground as soon as they are taken away: And in proportion as the necessity of a good Life is weaken'd, so much is the power and beauty of that Holy Religion which Christ brought into the World lessen'd. Religion contains Doctrines, Precepts, Promises and Threatnings. It do's altogether depend upon the existence of a God, and the certainty of another Life, and a Judgment to come. But if you banish

Part I. nish out of Religion the absolute necessity of good Works, you attack it in all its Parts, and you undermine its very Foundations. For this makes the Knowledge of its Doctrines vain and needless; it turns its Precepts into bare Counsels; the Promises of it, which are conditional, and suppose Obedience, cease to be Promises; the Threats which God denounces against Sinners are but empty Menaces, which God makes only to fright Men, but do's not intend to execute. This destroys the chiefest and strongest Proofs of the existence of a God, and of another Life; it ruins that great Argument for Religion, which is drawn from the difference between Virtue and Vice, and from the Deserts of both; and it contradicts the necessity, the nature and justice of the last Judgment. All this may easily be demonstrated. This necessity of good Works might likewise be prov'd from the plain Declarations of the Word of God; and it might be shewn, that there is no Truth more clearly and frequently inculcated than this in Holy Writ. But not to engage in these Particulars, which do not properly belong to my Purpose; I shall take it for granted, that a Holy Life is absolutely necessary; for either that is true, or there is nothing true in Religion.

Yet how clear soever this Truth may be, it is but little known, and Men are not much persuaded of it. No Man indeed do's flatly  
and

and without some preamble deny the necessity of Holiness; every Teacher professes that to be his Doctrine; all Christians, in shew at least, are agreed about it. But when they come to explain their meaning clearly concerning this Necessity; when it comes to the Application or to Practice, or when they establish other Doctrines, they contradict themselves, they hesitate upon the matter, or they explain it with certain Restrictions, which sooth Men in security, and dispose them to believe that Salvation may be obtain'd without good Works; which overthrows their necessity. Nay, some frame to themselves such a Notion of Religion as even excludes good Works; this will appear in the following Chapters.

If it be said, That tho this intire and indispensable necessity of a good Life were not suppos'd, yet this would not presently open a Door to Licentiousness, since there remain other sufficient Motives to Holiness, such as those which are deriv'd from the Justice and Reasonableness of the divine Laws, from the Gratitude and Love we owe to God, from the Edification of our Neighbour, and from our Calling and Duty: I answer, that these Motives are very just and pressing, and that they necessarily enter into that Obedience, which all true Christians pay to the Commandments of God. I acknowledg besides, that they would be sufficient to inspire all Men with the love



Part I. of Virtue, if they did all govern themselves by the Principles of right Reason and Justice. But these are not the only Motives which ought to be urg'd; God proposes others besides; he promises, he threatens, he declares, \* *That without holiness no Man shall see his Face*, which imports an absolute necessity. And surely as Men generally are, there are many of them upon whom those Motives taken from Decency, Justice, Gratitude, Duty, or the Edification of our Neighbours, will have very little force. The most honourable Motives are not always the most effectual. Man being so corrupt, is so many ways, and by so strong a bias carried towards Evil, that it is hard for him without an absolute necessity to abstain from it. But how much less will he refrain from Sin, if he is persuaded that it is not necessary to controul his Inclinations, and to confine himself to a kind of Life, which appears unpleasant and melancholy to him? Now as this is the disposition in which most People are, we need no longer wonder why there is so little Religion and Piety among Men.

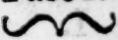
2. If it is difficult to practise those Duties which we do not think necessary, especially when they cross our Inclinations; it is yet harder to practise them, when we do not know them. It is not possible to do good

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\* Heb. XII. 14.

or to avoid evil, if we do not know the Cause good that we should do, and the evil we ought to shun. Now in this the generality of Christians want Instruction. Every body speaks of Piety and Virtue, but few Men know what they are. The common People are little acquainted with the Duties of Religion, or the Rules of Christian Morals. This must be confest, and the Glory of God requires that we should ingenuously own it. I cannot but enter here into some Particulars to prove this Ignorance. I.

1. There are some essential Duties unknown to a great number of Christians, and which were never thought of by an infinity of Men. I will alledg for an Instance one of the plainest and most necessary Duties of Morality, and that is Restitution. Tho the Scripture should not expressly enjoin it, we need but consult Reason and natural Justice to be convinc'd, that he who has done an injury to another Man by taking from him any part of his Property, is bound to make up that damage, by restoring to him whatever he has wrong'd him of. There is every day occasion enough to make Restitution; nothing being more common, than for one Man to appropriate to himself by unlawful means what belongs to another: and yet in many places Restitution is a thing without Precedent. But this we ought not to wonder at, considering that there are thousands of Christians who ne-

Part I.  ver heard a word of this Duty. This matter is so little known, and the People are so little instructed about it; that a Treatise concerning Restitution, written by Mr. *la Placette*, having been publish'd some Years since; it has been read as a very singular Book, the subject whereof was new and curious. Nay, some have gone so far as to censure this Doctrine of Restitution, pretending that it was novel and too-severe; such a pitch of ignorance are Men arriv'd at in matters of Morality. And this is not the only Duty which is not understood; there are many others besides, either among those which are common to all Men, or among those which are particular to every Calling, and which it do's not appear that Men were ever taught or ever made the least Reflection upon. Now a Man must needs neglect the Duties that he do's not know.

2. There are divers Sins, which are not commonly rank'd among Sins, or which Men do not think to be damning Sins. Of this number is Lying and Insincerity, either in discourse or in dealings. Among these we may also reckon Luxury, Sloth, a soft and voluptuous Life; many indirect Practices to grow Rich, which are establish'd and authoriz'd by Custom; Drunkenness, which in some Countries is not esteem'd a Vice, and all those Sins which are only committed by our Thoughts. Christians now a-days think themselves innocent, so they

do not do things manifestly Criminal. They Cause conceive that Murder is a Crime, but they I. do not think themselves guilty for passing a rash judgment upon their Neighbours, or taking up unjust suspicions of them. They believe Uncleaness to be a Sin, tho even some are very indulgent to themselves upon this Head; but impure Thoughts or Sensuality go for nothing with them. Thus there are many Sins which Men are not instructed about; and what wonder is it then, if they commit them without scruple, and if there is so much Corruption in their Manners?

3. There are some general Maxims in Morality, without the knowledg of which it is impossible to have a solid Piety; and yet these are almost universally unknown; especially these two, which describe to us the Characters of true Holiness. The first is, That a habit of Sin is an infallible token of a corrupt Man; and that any one habitual Sin which a Man do's not forsake, especially when he is warned of it, is enough to shut him out of Heaven. This Maxim is understood but by very few People. Most Men are engag'd in vitious Habits; such as praying without Attention, Swearing, falling into a Passion, or the like: These habits grow stronger with Age, Men live and die in them, and yet they think they die in a State of Salvation. The other Maxim which is neither less important

nor



Part I. nor better known, is, That there is a vast difference between Sin and Sin, and between Sinners and Sinners; that the Frailties of good Men are one thing, and the great and wilful Sins of bad Men, another thing. If Men do not apprehend this difference, they will confound Virtue with Vice, and good Men with impious Wretches; and yet this is little observ'd. It is commonly believ'd that all Men being Sinners, they are all upon the matter in the same condition, and do all sin alike, so that there is no great odds between them. Such Notions must needs make way for Libertinism.

4. If Christians have some knowledg concerning the Duties of Morality; yet that knowledg is too general and superficial. They know perhaps in the main that some Sins are to be avoided, and some Virtues to be practis'd; but that they only know confusedly: they content themselves with some general Ideas, which for the most part prove useless and insignificant. The design of Morality, is to regulate Mens Actions, in all the Circumstances they may be in; and to teach them how they ought to behave themselves, in all the different Cases and Emergencies of Life. Now as these Cases and Circumstances are infinitely various, it is necessary that Men should know their Duty with some exactness, and that they should have Rules at hand applicable

applicable to all particular Cases, by the help of which they may discern what is lawful from what is not. For here superficial Knowledge and general Ideas, will not serve the turn; because they do not determine particular Cases.

The Principles of Morality are clear, but it is requisite to make a just Application of them, and to draw right Consequences from them. Every body acknowledges that wrong is not to be done to any Man, but few know what the doing of wrong is. There are innumerable ways of violating Justice in relation to our Neighbours, or of getting Money, which are sinful; and yet these are made use of every day, and People think that there is no harm in them; and so they are guilty of Cheating, Extortion and Injustice, and they do not know it. Whence does this proceed but from Ignorance, or from those general and superficial Notions which I have mention'd? This is one of the Reasons why some Books and discourses of Piety produce so little effect, they handle things only in the lump; they treat of Virtues and Vices, of Temperance, of Covetousness and Injustice; they exhort and threaten: but they usually go no further than Generalities, and they seldom descend to those Particulars, which are so necessary to inform and direct the Conscience.

5. Men are no less ignorant concerning the Degrees, than they are concerning the

Parts

**Part I. Parts of Holiness.** Christians are not only oblig'd to the practice of many Virtues; but they ought besides to practise them in the most perfect manner. Our Saviour do's not require in his Disciples a mean and ordinary degree of Holiness; but he calls them to Perfection. He demands that they should carry Virtue much farther, than either the Heathens or the Jews did; that they should practise Charity, even to the loving of their Enemies; that they should be so patient as to think it their happiness to suffer; so humble as chearfully to bear Contempt and Injustice; so pure, as to banish all uncleanness from their very Thoughts; and so of all the other Virtues. But an infinite number of Christians are strangers to these Ideas of Perfection. They never knew the extent of the Duties of Christianity; they have neither tenderness of Conscience, nor elevated Sentiments about Morality. They think they do much if they observe that which is most simple and easy in every Virtue; they confine themselves to that, and aim at no other Perfection; so that sublime Virtue and Piety are not to be sought for amongst them.

6. Lastly, Mens ignorance do's not only appear in that they do not know their Duty; but it do's likewise discover it self in this, that they do not know themselves. The knowledg of one's self is a Capital point

point in Religion. For it is not enough to Cause  
be informed of one's Duty; every one must I.  
know besides, whether he observes it or ~~~~~  
not, whether he really has Religion and  
Piety; for upon this depends the Judgment  
he is to make of himself, and of his own  
Condition: Now People are as much in the  
dark about this Article, as about the others  
I have mention'd. The greatest part of  
Men live without reflecting upon them-  
selves, and in a prodigious unconcernedness  
about their spiritual State. They do not  
trouble themselves to inquire, whether they  
are of the number of good or bad Men,  
whether they are in a state of Grace, or of  
Damnation or not. Or, if at any time they  
take this into Consideration, they most com-  
monly flatter themselves by pronouncing  
too favourable a Judgment upon their own  
Condition. There are many who boldly  
rank themselves among good Men; and yet  
are not able to give a solid reason of that  
opinion they have conceiv'd of their own  
Probity and Virtue; nay, they are perhaps  
actually engag'd in Vice and Impiety. If  
they are but free from noisy and scandalous  
Sins, if they feel now and then some good  
Motions, if they have some good Qualities,  
or an inclination to some Virtues, or an ab-  
horrence of some Vices; that is enough to  
fill them with a good opinion of themselves.  
Now, when Men are thus blinded by Self-  
love, and do not know themselves; there is  
but



**Part I.** but little hope of them, and they will undoubtedly fall into a state of Security.

These Considerations plainly shew, if I am not mistaken, that Men for the most part live in very great ignorance. But I think my self bound to answer an Objection, which may be offer'd against what has been said. Some will think no doubt, that it is very difficult for Men to be so well instructed as I suppose they ought to be; and that the People are not capable of such an exact knowledg of Morality.

To satisfy those who make this objection, and to clear this matter fully: I observe first; that by all I have said, I do by no means pretend that all Christians can, or ought to be equally instructed. I know that there are degrees of Knowledg, and that in Morality, as well as in Doctrines, Divines and Men of Parts, go a great way beyond the bulk of Mankind. It is sufficient for every one to be instructed, according to his capacity and his condition. But after all it must be granted, that the knowledg of the Principles of Morality is necessary to every body; or else we must strike several Precepts out of the Gospel: unless we imagine that those Precepts are intended only for a small number of learned and subtil Men; which is directly opposite to our Saviour's words; who said, that his Doctrine is design'd for all Mankind, for the little ones and the simple, rather

ther than for \* *the Wise and Prudent*. There Cause  
 is no Christian but ought to be a *spiritual* I.  
*Man and taught of God*. When St. Paul  
 says, *prove all things, hold fast that which is*  
*good: Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever*  
*things are honest, whatsoever things are just,*  
*whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things*  
*are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;*  
*if there be any vertue, if there be any praise,*  
*think on these things:* When St. Peter ex-  
 horts Christians, *to add to their Faith all*  
*Christian Virtues, to grow and abound in all*  
*these Virtues;* such Exhortations do belong  
 equally to all the Professors of Christianity.

It must not be said, that there are Men  
 in the World of very dull and shallow Ca-  
 pacities, and that Country People and Me-  
 chanicks cannot comprehend all these Max-  
 ims of Morality. This is not so difficult as  
 it is imagin'd. The duties of Morality are  
 clear, they presently affect a Man, because  
 they are consonant to the common noti-  
 ces and sentiments of Conscience. Chuse  
 what part of Morality you please, and you  
 may with due endeavours make either a  
 Handycraftsman or a Day-labourer appre-  
 hend it; so you confine your self to the  
 knowledg and practice of those Duties  
 which are necessary to such People in their  
 several Callings. Is there any thing more

\* Matth. XI. 25. 1 Cor. X. John VI. 45. 1 Theff. V.  
 20. Phil. IV. 8. 2 Pet. II. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Part I. subtil or difficult in the rules of Morality, than there is in a hundred dexterities and shifts, which are practised in the Affairs of this Life; and which common People can attain to without any great pains? If therefore Mens Understandings are so gross and stupid in moral matters; it is not because these matters are above their reach; but because they were never taught them, or never apply'd themselves to them. We ought not to judg of what Men might be by what they are. The best Ground becomes barren when it is not cultivated. If things are well order'd among Christians, in relation especially to the Instruction of the People, and the Education of Children; the generality of them would not be so stupid and ignorant as they are. We may therefore conclude, That Ignorance is one of the general causes of Corruption. Christians being ill inform'd of the Truths and Duties of their Religion; and wanting Instruction both as to Faith and Manners, they must needs live in a great neglect of Religious matters.

It may be ask'd, Whence do's this Ignorance proceed? I shall observe three principal Causes of it. The first is Education; the way in which Children are bred up, do's infallibly lead to ignorance. The second is the want of means to get good Instruction, and particularly the defect of those Instructions which are delivered to Christians,



Christians, in Sermons, Catechisms, and Books. The third is the sloth and carelessness of Men, who will be at no pains to acquire necessary Knowledge. We might bestow very weighty Considerations upon every one of these three Heads; but since they will come again in our way, in the sequel of this Treatise, it is enough to have pointed at them in this place, as the three main sources of Ignorance. In truth, if Men are ill educated, if they are destitute of the necessary means of Instruction, and take no care about it; whence should they have sufficient Knowledge? unless they were instructed by Miracles, by Revelations, and Inspirations, they cannot but be ignorant and corrupt.

But now if Ignorance be the first cause of Corruption; it is plain that the first remedy to be us'd against Corruption, is the removing that Ignorance. It is that we are to begin at, if we would bring back Christians to a Life worthy of the Religion they profess. Exhortations, Censures, and all other such Methods will signify nothing, as long as mens Minds are not prepar'd by proper Instructions.

From all that has been said in this Chapter, it may be gathered, That the right way to instruct Men, is before all things to convince them of the truth of Religion; and to make them sensible that there is nothing more certain, or of greater consequence



**Part I.** quence in the World, than the Principles of Christianity. The belief of the general Truths, ought especially to be well fix'd in their Minds; that there is a God, a Providence, a Judgment, and another Life. After this we must proceed to the particular Truths of the Gospel; and as we go on in explaining them, we ought to shew what influence those Truths have upon Holiness and Salvation.

But the most important thing of all, when these Truths are settl'd, is to shew, that the bare Knowledg of the Christian Doctrines, is not able to make Men happy; that the scope of Religion is to make Men truly good; and that without Piety and good Works there is no Salvation.

It will not be sufficient to recommend Sanctification in general, but the nature of it must besides be distinctly explain'd; it must be shew'd which are the general and particular Obligations of a Christian Life, and what Sins are contrary to these. And here those whose business it is to instruct the People, ought to be as particular as possibly they can; shewing upon each Vertue and Vice what the nature of it is, and what are the several Characters, Kinds and Degrees of it; and proposing likewise the Motives which should discourage Men from those Vices, and prompt them to the practice of the opposite Vertues; as also the Directions which may facilitate the performance

## Corruption of Christians.

51

mance of all these Duties. When Teachers shall go thus to work, they will soon perceive some amendment; God's Blessing will accompany the use of those means which he has appointed. Christians being rightly inform'd, will of their own accord apply themselves to Vertue; Corruption will lessen by degrees; and Christianity recovering its antient lustre, will begin to appear with another Face than it do's at this Day.

Cause  
I.

D 2 CAUSE

## CAUSE II.

*Prejudices and False Notions concerning  
RELIGION.*

**H**OW ignorant and corrupt soever Men may be, they cannot live absolutely without Religion; very few at least can go so far. If they are hinder'd by their Corruption, to know and practise pure Christianity; yet a remnant of Light and Conscience within them, does not suffer them to run themselves wholly into Irreligion, and to lay aside all thoughts of Salvation. But to reconcile these two Principles, of which one draws them off from Religion, and the other leads them to it; they form to themselves such Ideas of Religion, as are agreeable to their Inclinations, and flatter their Security: and being possess'd with those Ideas, they confirm themselves more and more in their Corruption. These false Notions and Prejudices are worse than Ignorance, and prove a greater Obstacle to the reviving of Vertue and Piety. It is better to deal with Men who are simply ignorant, than with People who have wrong Apprehensions, and are full of Prejudices. The former being not prepossess'd, may more easily be reclaim'd: but



but it is much harder to prevail upon pre-engag'd Persons, especially in the point of Religion; because while they maintain their Errors, they fancy they defend the Truth, and that they promote the Glory of God. False Notions and Prejudices in Religion, are therefore one of those Causes of Corruption, which it concerns us most to take notice of. I shall endeavour to point at the chief of them in this Chapter.

The first I shall name, is the Opinion of those, who think that Religion is intended only to comfort Men, and to render them happy. And it is no wonder that Men should commonly resolve all Religion into this. The Desire of Happiness is natural to Men: and as they are sensible upon serious Consideration, that perfect Happiness is not to be obtain'd in this World, if it were for no other reason but that they must die, they seek in Religion some Consolation and Remedy, against that fatal necessity, of quitting all the Pleasures and Advantages of this present Life. Indeed the sense of their Corruption should restrain them from flattering themselves with the hopes of Salvation: but they rely upon the Assurances of the Divine Mercy, which Religion gives to Men; and they persuade themselves, that their Sins will not obstruct their Felicity. This is properly the Notion which Men entertain of Religion, and that which they think it is good for. But that Religion

I.



Part I. should indispensably oblige Men to fear God and to live well, and that without this, there is neither true Religion, nor Happiness; is that which is not commonly believ'd.

There is no question but that the Design of Religion is to comfort Men, and to lead them to Happiness. This was God's purpose in sending his Son to redeem the World. But this is not the only end of Religion; it is intended besides for the Glory of God and the Sanctification of Men; and it does properly consist in the Service and Obedience which are paid to God. Salvation is a consequence of this Service, and a gratuitous Reward, which God is pleas'd to bestow upon those who honour and fear him. Nothing therefore is more absurd than the Conceit of those, who look only upon that side of Religion which promises Comfort and Salvation; and nothing is more dangerous or more apt to make Men remiss and careless in their Duty; yet this Imagination is very common: and if I was to define Religion by the ordinary Apprehensions which Men have of it, I would say, That it is nothing else but a Mean to bring Sinners to Heaven, and to make Men eternally happy, whatsoever their Course and Manner of Life may be.

II. But Men would not so easily promise themselves Salvation, if they had not very mean and imperfect Ideas of Religion. I shall therefore observe,

*Secondly,*

Secondly, That Men commonly place Cause  
Christianity, either in bare Knowledge, or II.  
in an external Profession, or in Confidence. ~~~~~  
But Holiness does not make a part of their  
Notion of Religion, or at best it makes but  
a very inconsiderable part of it.

It is not to be deny'd but that Knowledge  
is essential to Religion, and that as it holds  
the first rank in it, so it is the foundation of  
it all. Nay, it is impossible to engage Men  
to Holiness, without laying first in them the  
Foundation of good and sound Doctrine.  
This I have prov'd in the first Chapter of  
this Treatise. An outward and Publick  
Profession is likewise essential to Religion,  
for one cannot be a Christian without it.  
And further, it is beyond all doubt, that  
Religion inspires Confidence, Peace and Joy.  
The Knowledge of Christ, and of the Sal-  
vation he has procur'd for us, must natural-  
ly produce these effects. Knowledge, Pro-  
fession, and Confidence, are therefore inclu-  
ded in the Idea of Religion; but as necessa-  
ry as they are, yet they are not sufficient.

Knowledge is not the whole of Religion,  
since the Gospel as well as Experience teaches  
us, that it may be found in the worst of  
Men: it is not therefore a saving Knowledge  
but when it produces Piety and Charity.  
The Definition which *St. Paul* gives of the  
Christian Religion, is that it is \* a Knowledge

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\* Tit. I. 1.

Part I. of the Truth according to Godliness. We may read what the Apostle tells us concerning that Knowledg which is void of Charity, 1 Cor. XIII. As for an outward Profession, it is altogether useles without Sanctity. A Hypocrite may live in the Church, and perform even with applause the external Duties of Piety. This we may likewise learn from Scripture and daily Experience. Lastly, All Confidence which is not supported by Piety, is vain and deceitful. The bare Persuasion that one shall be sav'd, gives no Man a Right to Salvation. A very wicked Person may without any ground rely upon God's Mercy, and this is what Divines call Presumption and Security.

But tho all this is very plain, both from Scripture and good Sense, yet Men entertain Opinions contrary to it. A great many think themselves Christians, because they know the Truths and Doctrines of Christianity. I do not inquire here, Whether all those who think they know Religion, do really know it? But howsoever this Knowledg, true or false, makes many judg most favourably of themselves; it does so puff them up, that they look on themselves as the Stays and Supporters of Religion. Others, of whom there is an infinite number, imagine that so they profess the true Religion, they need not fear any thing concerning their Salvation; especially if this outward Profession is attended with some



some apparent Zeal, and some Assiduity in Cause the publick Exercises of Religion. Lastly, II. It is believ'd by many, that God requires nothing else of Men but Confidence, and that if they are in that disposition they cannot come short of Salvation. They think that in order to Salvation, it is enough to acknowledg that they are miserable Sinners, and to trust in the Divine Mercy, and in the Merits of Jesus Christ.

This last Prejudice which reduces Religion to Acts of Confidence, is perhaps the commonest of all. And yet if we were to determine which of these three, *viz.* Knowledge, Profession, and Confidence, is the least essential to Religion; we must say, that it is Confidence. It is a thing unconceivable and contradictory, that a Man should be a Christian without knowing and without making publick Profession of his Religion: But a Man may be a Christian and a good Man too, and yet want Confidence. For as it frequently happens that a bad Man is animated with a false Confidence, so a good Man may have a timorous Conscience, and be possess'd with groundless Fears. Sometimes Melancholy, or a want of Knowledge or of Force of Mind, or even Constitution, may throw good Men into a State in which they feel no comfort. But without insisting upon this, it is visibly an Error as common as it is pernicious, for Men to pretend that Knowledge, Profession, or Con-



**Part I.** Confidence, are sufficient to Salvation, when they are separated from the Practice of Holiness.

It may perhaps be objected, that no Man has these Opinions, and that every body acknowledges, that Religion obliges Men to be Holy. I grant that no Man does expressly exclude Holiness; it is confess'd by all, that the practice of it is necessary. But yet I maintain, that it is look'd upon as the least necessary thing in Religion. And to prove this, I need but alledg the difference which is made between Knowledge, Profession, and Confidence, and the Practice of good Works. The three first are generally press'd and recommended in another manner than the last.

As to Knowledge, it is not without reason represented as absolutely necessary: It is said, That a Man must know and believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith; and whoever denies any one of them, is excluded from Salvation. This Necessity is extended to many Doctrines, which are not of the same importance with Fundamental Truths; many Questions are determin'd, and all these Decisions are made Articles of Faith. If any one raises any doubt about them, he is treated as a Heretick, and People cry out as if Religion was upon the brink of Ruin. So that upon this Head extreme Severity is us'd, every Fault is capital, and no allowance is made for human Infirmary.

†

As

As to outward Profession, the necessity of Cause  
it is openly maintain'd, and not without II.  
just cause. In this point Man's Duty, and  
the Precepts of the Gospel, are rigorously  
press'd. The least dissembling of a Man's  
Belief, the least Act of unlawful Worship,  
is call'd Apostacy. It is declar'd, that Men  
are bound upon pain of Damnation, to for-  
sake and suffer all, rather than do any thing  
against their Conscience. In relation to  
this, nothing is remitted or softened, and  
the weak and timorous are no ways in-  
dulg'd.

As to Confidence, it is spoken of in such  
manner, as makes People conceive that it is  
the more effectual to Salvation, the firmer it  
is, and the more remov'd from doubt. The  
greatest Sinner relies boldly upon the Mercy  
of God, and does not question but that he  
has a Right to apply to himself all the Pro-  
mises of the Gospel, provided he believes;  
that is to say, as it is meant, so he has but  
Confidence enough.

But when the Practice of good Works is  
discours'd of, the Declarations of the Gospel  
are not press'd with the same rigour. That  
Zeal which upon all other Heads hearkens  
to no Accommodation, becomes here very  
tractable; and a great deal of Remissness  
appears as to this Article. The Doctrines  
are press'd, publick Profession is strictly en-  
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**Part I.** not be so severely urg'd, and that something is to be allow'd for human Frailty. And yet it seems that as the Scripture inculcates nothing so much as the Necessity of a good Life, so it were necessary to insist as much at least upon this Point, as upon any other; and that it should not be rank'd as it is, in the lowest degree, and among the least necessary things. One would think likewise, that the pressing Sanctification, is to require nothing of Men, but what is as easy, if not more, than certain other Duties, which are absolutely impos'd on them, upon pain of Damnation; such as the forsaking all that is dear to them in this World, and the suffering of Death in time of Persecution. But without enlarging upon this Subject, it is evident that the generality of Christians do not believe that Holiness is so essential a part of Religion, as it really is, and that they do not well understand the nature of Christianity; from whence it necessarily follows, that they must neglect the Practice of Holiness.

**III.** But there are some Prejudices, which do yet more directly attack Piety; and they are those which People entertain concerning Piety and Morality it self. I shall instance this, first in the opinion of those who pretend that Morality is not of such great moment in Religion, who speak of it with contempt, and cry it down; and who unreasonably setting Faith in opposition to Good Works,

Works, maintain that it is enough to be-  
lieve, and that those who insist upon Mo-  
rals do not apprehend the nature of the Gos-  
pel. Now one would think that such ab-  
surd and unchristian Imaginations should  
be universally rejected; but because what-  
ever gratifies Corruption is usually welcome  
to Men, these Opinions have their Advo-  
cates, even among Divines, as might easily  
be shewn from the printed Works of some  
Authors, who seem to have had a design to  
disparage Good Works, and to oppose the  
necessity of Sanctification. This Prejudice  
overturns the Foundations of Morality, by  
destroying its necessity, and rendring it con-  
temptible. I only give here a hint of it,  
because I am to shew in other places that  
it is the height of Extravagance thus to set  
up Faith against Morality, to ascribe all to  
the one, and to speak but very slightly of  
the other.

And yet some People do not stop here.  
They think it is dangerous to insist so much  
upon Morality; nay, some have proceeded  
so far, as to say, This was one of the Cha-  
racters of Heresy. I confess, this Opinion is  
not very common. It ought not to be im-  
puted to the People, nor even to the Liber-  
tines. None but a few conceited Divines  
have had the face to maintain it, which by  
the by increases the Scandal, that is occa-  
sion'd by such Propositions. I am willing  
to believe that those who advance them,  
qualify

Cause  
II.

IV.

**Part I.** qualify them with some Restrictions, and that they are not sensible of the terrible Consequences which flow from them; but that they have been betray'd into the speaking or writing of such things, either thro some Prejudice, or thro the Heat of Dispute. But after all, if these Propositions were strictly taken, and set out in their true colours, they could not but be look'd upon as false, rash, scandalous, and capable of producing most dismal Effects, especially being asserted by Divines: And if we did not judg charitably of the Intentions of their Authors, we might justly say, That those who dare disparage Morality, and insinuate that the pressing it is a mark of Heresy, do themselves publish a most pernicious Heresy. Can it be a mark of Heresy to insist upon that which our Saviour has so vehemently press'd; which is the only thing he inculcates in his Sermon \* upon the Mount; which the Apostles perpetually † urge in their Epistles, and declare to be the end of our whole Religion, and the Character whereby the Children of God are discriminated from the Children of the Devil; and without which, both Christ and his Apostles assure us, || that no man shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?

\* Mat. V. 6, 7. † 1 Tim. I. 5. 1 John III. 8.  
 || Mat. VII. 21. Heb. XII. 14.



## Corruption of Christians.

61

By this, the Truth of Religion is as much **Cause**  
struck at and injur'd as Piety it self. It gives **II.**  
one an indignation to see that the Honour  
of defending Vertue and Piety, should be  
yielded up to Hereticks. To say that for  
the most part, Hereticks are strong upon  
the head of Morality, is in a manner to  
give up the Cause; it is the ready way to  
confirm them in their Errors; and it does  
basely to ascribe that to Heresy, which be-  
longs to true Religion, and is the Glory of  
it. It would be to no purpose to alledg,  
that some Hereticks have writ upon Mora-  
lity with good success. For granting this  
to be true, it is not a Token of their He-  
resy; on the contrary, so far they are Or-  
thodox. Some Orthodox Christians have  
recommended Morality as much and better  
than the Hereticks, because they have esta-  
blish'd it upon the Foundations and Mo-  
tives which pure Doctrines afford. On the  
other hand, there have always been Here-  
ticks, who did subvert and ruin Morality;  
as for instance, those who are describ'd by  
St. Paul in the Second of *Timothy*, and by  
St. Peter in his Second Epistle. It is then  
very unreasonable to say, That a thing  
which neither agrees to all Hereticks, nor  
to Hereticks alone, is a mark of Heresy.  
There is much more reason to charge those  
who speak so injuriously of Morality, with  
maintaining a Heresy, which comes very  
near that of the *Gnosticks*, who were op-  
pos'd



Part I. pos'd by the Apostles, and condemn'd and detested by the whole Church, as Corrupters of the Morals of the Gospel.

V.

But tho the greatest part of Christians reject the Opinions I have now mention'd, and acknowledg the Excellency of Morality; yet they form to themselves too easy a Notion of the Duties of it. This is another Prejudice, which does not a little contribute to that neglect of Piety they live in. The Notion of those who think that the Practice of Piety is easy, is true in the main: \* *God's Commandments are not grievous*; and † *Christ's Yoke is easy, and his Burden light*. We should therefore always suppose, that it is not difficult to lead a good Life, and to work out one's Salvation. But the Error lies in imagining too great an easiness in this, and in not considering aright the Nature and the Extent of the Duties of Morality. There are but few whose Notions in this matter come up to the Standard of the Gospel, and to that Perfection which Christians are to aim at. Few understand to what degree the Practice of Vertue is to be carry'd; as for the purpose, what sort of Justice, Equity, Honesty, Disinterestedness, Purity, or Charity becomes a Professor of Christ's Religion. Instead of rising up to that high and sublime pitch of Morality which the Gospel demands; and in-

\* 1 John V. 3.

† Mat. XI. 30.

stead of being acted by noble Views and Cause  
Designs worthy of Christianity, Men com- II.  
monly take up with mean and slight Appre-  
hensions of it. According to the general  
Opinion, a very extraordinary and elevated  
Vertue is not requisite, in order to be a  
good Man. It is enough for a Man if he  
is not a notorious Villain, or a profligate  
Wretch ; and if he observe some of those  
Duties which have a shew of Sanctity.  
Thus Holiness is reduc'd to the lowest de-  
gree of Vertue, or rather to the least de-  
gree of Sin ; it is brought to very little, and  
yet that little is often neglected : for Men  
never go so far in Practice as they do in Spe-  
culation ; they always do less than they  
think themselves bound to do : so that their  
Actions still fall short of the Idea which  
they form of their Duty.

What Judgment then are we to make of VI.  
Christians now-a-days? Tho they should  
act suitably to their Notion of Piety and  
Morality, yet they would discharge their  
Duty but very indifferently, because that  
Notion is but low and defective. But yet  
as mean and imperfect as it is, their Prac-  
tice does not reach it. They frequently al-  
low themselves in things which are against  
their own Conscience ; and tho they violate  
the clearest and easiest Rules of Vertue,  
yet they fancy those to be Sins from which  
no Man is free, and which will however be  
forgiven: At this rate Corruption must needs  
be very great: E But

Part I.

But as Men often form to themselves too easy a Notion of Piety, so they have sometimes too severe an Idea of it. It may perhaps seem at first sight, that it is not very necessary to remark and confute this Prejudice. The general Depravation of Manners seems to make it evident, that the Notions which prevail at this time are not the rigid ones, and that Men do not much trouble themselves about the Rules of too austere a Devotion or Morality. But yet it is usual enough for Men to run into this other extreme; and such an excessive Severity is not so inconsistent as it may be thought with the Corruption of Manners. For tho many frame to themselves too hard and rigid a Notion of Piety, yet they do not think themselves bound to live according to it, but they leave those Maxims to the Devout, and they imagine that so much Piety is not necessary; so that they fashion to themselves a commodious Religion, and such a Morality as has nothing that is troublesome or difficult in it.

Howsoever, there are many who look upon Piety as an austere thing; they conceive it to be an Enemy to all Joy, and that it debars Men of all Pleasure, so that it produces nothing but Sadness and Melancholy. And they are besides possess'd with this Error, that the Practice of it is uneasy and difficult, or even impossible. But why do Men judg of Piety with so much Prepossession

session and Injustice? This proceeds from Cause  
two Causes. II.

The first is their carnal Disposition. They are incapable of relishing any other Pleasures but those of the Body or of this present Life, because they are accustom'd to be govern'd only by their Senses; and that is enough to represent Piety to them as sour and distastful, not only because it does not procure to them those gross Pleasures, but because it does likewise in many cases oblige them to renounce them.

The second Reason why Men entertain this Prejudice against Piety, is, that it is not represented to them in its true shape. And here first, there is a great deal of hurt done by the false Pretenders to Devotion; who affect a mournful and severe outward Appearance, and whose Behaviour is often intolerably stern and savage. In the next place, profane Men contribute to this Mischief; for as they neither know nor love Religion, so they make odious Pictures of it, and they take a delight in carrying the Notions of Devotion too far, that it may appear ridiculous.

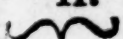
Thirdly, There are several well-meaning Persons, whose Zeal being not regulated and soften'd by a discreet and prudent Knowledge, gives an occasion to those unfavourable Judgments, which the World passes upon Piety. Such People think that it is the Duty of a devout Person, never to



**Part I.** be seen but in an austere Appearance, and with a dejected Look; they are continually censuring, and never pleas'd; their Zeal is either superstitious, scrupulous, or ignorant, sharp, or unseasonable; and so it is extremely apt to alienate mens Minds from Devotion and Piety.

Fourthly, Some Divines and Moralists confirm this Prejudice, by their way of recommending the Practice of Piety, both in their publick Discourses and in their Books. Religion and its Duties are often propos'd to the People from the Pulpit, in such a severe and frightful manner, as is not very fit to make it appear lovely to Men, who for the most part have already a prejudice against it. We find too rigid a Morality, and several strain'd Maxims in many Sermons and Books of Devotion. And it may perhaps be of some use, to give here some Instances of this kind.

When worldly-minded Men are told, that Salvation is a most difficult thing, and that whoever will obtain it, ought to spend his Life in perpetual mourning; this is no great Attractive to gain them to the Love of Religion. Such Maxims may be true in some respect, but they are false and extravagant, when they are propos'd without Distinction or Explication. By the Descriptions which are sometimes made of the Vanity of the World, and of Devotion, one would think that a Man cannot live like

like a Christian, without laying aside all Cause  
secular Concerns and Business, and giving II.  
up himself to Solitude and Retirement.   
Now this is what few Men are capable of;  
and besides, it is against the Order of Pro-  
vidence, which has plac'd us in the World,  
to live and labour in it, and to enjoy the  
good things which the Divine Liberality  
has provided for us.

That which is asserted by some Moralists,  
concerning the Love of God, and their Zeal  
for his Glory, supposes that Men are ob-  
lig'd to think actually upon God at all times,  
and to have a positive Intention to promote  
his Glory in all the Actions of their Lives.  
But such Morality, to say no more, is ab-  
surd, and impossible to be reduc'd to prac-  
tice. It is not possible for a Man to have  
God always in his thoughts, and to make  
pious Reflections upon every step he takes,  
or every word he speaks. And there are  
such Actions in Life, which cannot without  
Profanation be refer'd to the Glory of God  
by a direct Intention. St. Paul indeed en-  
joins us, *\* to do all things to the Glory of God*;  
but this Rule is not to be taken in the ut-  
most strictness, nor extended to all particu-  
lar Actions. It is enough to have a sin-  
cere and general Intention to procure God's  
Glory, and to do one's Duty upon all occa-  
sions. In order to which, these four things

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\* 1 Cor. X. 31.

Part I. are necessary: 1. That we should not fail to think of God actually, in all those Actions that require it. 2. That if by reason of the present State we are in, we cannot think on God at all times, and in all our Actions, we should at least think often upon him, and make frequent Reflections upon our own Conduct. 3. That in indifferent Actions, we should not abuse our Liberty, but demean our selves according to the Rules which the Gospel prescribes; and that we should especially have a great regard to the Edification of our Neighbour; it being particularly in that sense that this Commandment of *doing all things to the Glory of God*, is to be understood. 4. That we should love God above all things, and that It should be our chief Care and Endeavour to obey him, and to advance his Glory to the utmost of our power.

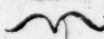
How many Scruples have been infus'd into mens Minds, by straining the Sense of this Declaration of our Saviour's, \* *Men shall give an account at the Day of Judgment of every idle Word that they shall speak*? What Inferences have not been drawn from this Place, to fill good Men with dread and terror? It is expounded as if all Discourses, which neither contribute to the Glory of God, nor to the Edification of our Neighbours, nor to the promoting of our own

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\* Mat. XII. 36.

### Corruption of Christians.

721

Salvation; were those *idle Words*, of which Cause  
men are to give an account to God. And II.  
yet it does not appear that Words purely  purely  
idle, are always sinful, or that they deserve  
the severe threatening which our Saviour de-  
nounces here. We cannot forbear talking  
every day of many indifferent things, and  
holding several Discourses which do neither  
good nor harm. Indeed if this should grow  
into a Habit, if we should for the most  
part speak only of trifling and frivolous  
things, it would be a Sin. But I do not  
apprehend what hurt there can be, in talk-  
ing now and then of News, of Rain, or of  
the Weather. Certainly these are not the  
words which are meant in this Declaration.  
The Place where we find it, and the Terms  
in which it is conceiv'd, do manifestly shew  
our Saviour's meaning to be this; That  
Men shall give an account at the Day of  
Judgment, of all the wicked and impious  
Words which they have spoken; and that  
the *Pharisees* particularly should be answer-  
able to God, for the Blasphemies which they  
utter'd against his Miracles.

These strain'd Maxims produce very per-  
nicious Effects. They expose Piety to the  
Flouts and Contempt of Libertines, and  
they discourage great numbers from it.  
Young People especially are by this means  
disgusted with Religion, and they take up  
an Aversion to it, which they seldom shake  
off afterwards. They accustom themselves



*Part I.* in that Age which is so sensible of Pleasure, to look upon Piety under an austere and melancholy Form; whilst on the side of the World and of their Passions, they see nothing but Sweetness and Charms. Between these two Objects, one of which is so enticing, and the other so disgustful, it is easy to imagine which side they will chuse. They run into the Imbraces of the World with the full swing of their Affections; but as to Religion, they must be urg'd and driven, and it is much if they can be brought to make some steps towards it. Even good Men, being discourag'd by this excessive Severity, do not make that Progress in Sanctification which otherwise they might; their Consciences are disturb'd with troublesom Scruples and continual Fears. It is therefore very necessary to remove this Prejudice, by representing Virtue and Piety under that easy and agreeable Shape which is natural to them, and by proposing such Ideas of Religion as may neither, on the one hand, produce Security and lull Mens Consciences asleep; nor, on the other hand, involve them in groundless Scruples.

*VII.* But if Men are averse to things austere and painful, they are wont likewise to despise those who they think have somewhat in them that is mean and ridiculous. And there are many who have such an Opinion of Piety; which proceeds first from  
the

*Corruption of Christians.*

73

Cause  
II.

the Ignorance and Corruption of Men, who because they are not well acquainted with Religion, or are possess'd with false Notions of Honour, look with contempt upon every thing which does not agree with the prevailing Customs and Maxims of the World. And then we may take notice besides, that Libertines do sometimes observe, either in that Religion which obtains in the Society wherein they live, or in the Deportment of those who have the Reputation of being Devout, several things, which lead them into this Opinion. With relation to Doctrines, they find certain Articles which Men of good Sense cannot digest, and they perceive manifest Abuses in the Worship; they see the People amus'd with childish Devotions, which favour of nothing else but Superstition, Credulity or Bigotry. Some of those, who do profess Devotion, seem to them to hold Opinions contrary to sound Reason, and to have some odd and ridiculous ways with them: They perhaps observe in the Ministers of Religion several Whimsies, Ignorances, and Weaknesses; they do not always find the best Sense in Discourses of Piety, neither do they think the Idea which is given them of Religion and its Duties, to be true, rational, or satisfactory. From all this they conclude, that to give themselves up to it, would be a disgrace to them; that it is calculated only for the Vulgar, and for weak Minds; and that the

Part I. the being neither pious nor devout, argues a strength and a greatness of Soul. This certainly is a most false and unjust Prejudice. There is nothing more serious nor more worthy of Esteem and Respect than Religion, and it is the highest pitch of Injustice to take an Estimate of it by the Errors and Weaknesses of Men; but yet this Prejudice is very common.

VIII. Lastly, We are to rank, among the Prejudices and false Notions of Men concerning Religion, the Opinions of those who are insatuated with mystical Piety and Fanaticism. And it is the more necessary to caution Men against those Opinions, because they are grown of late Years to be very common. Fanaticism spreads very much, and there is scarce a Country in *Europe* where it does not obtain under various Denominations, and where it has not occasion'd some Disturbance.

It would be difficult to give here an exact Account of mystical Piety and Fanaticism: It is a Subject upon which we cannot speak very clearly, because we can hardly have perspicuous and distinct Ideas of it; besides, that the *Mysticks* are not agreed among themselves: They are a Sect which is subdivided almost to Infinity; for not to mention the *Anabaptists*, the *Quakers*, the *Quietists*, and all those who come up to the height of fanatical Extravagances, there are many

many particular Sects which would scorn Cause  
the Name, and yet are wholly, or in part, II.  
possess'd with the Principles of the Fana-  
ticks. But in the main here is their Charac-  
ter.

They are almost all agreed in one thing, which is, that they make but very little account of outward Means, and of those Acts which concern the *Exterior* of Religion; such are the Order of the Church, Government, Discipline, Preaching, Liturgies, and the publick Exercises of Devotion: All these, if we believe them, are to be consider'd, as the first Elements of Piety, useful only to imperfect Christians. They have no great esteem neither for those Labours and Studies by which Men endeavour to acquire Knowledge. They reason a little about Religion; and, for the most part, they alledge no other Arguments for the Articles of their Belief, but the inward Sense they have of them. They do not condemn Morality and Good Works, but among themselves they speak but feebly of them, and in such a strain as lessens considerably their Usefulness and Necessity. They say, that our Works are nothing but Defilement and Abomination; that God does not look upon Works, and that Man ought not to judge of his Condition by them; but that all depends upon Faith and a Union with God. Hence it is that those Books, which lay a great stress upon the Practice of Christian Vertues, do not relish



Part I. relish best with them. They prefer Contemplations, Meditations and inward Recollections, before an active Life and the Practice of Morality. Nay, there are some who think, that all the care which Men use, and all the Efforts that they make to advance in Piety, signify but little. According to them, the way to Perfection and solid Vertue, is for a Man to be in a state of *Inaction*, to go out of himself, to annihilate himself; to have neither Thoughts, nor Desires, nor Will, but to be as it were dead in the sight of God: for thus they express themselves in figurative and mysterious Words. Under pretence of ascribing all to God, they assert, that Man is a mere Nothing, and an *Abyss* of Misery; that in order to be happy, 'tis enough for us to be sensible of our *Nothingness*, and to wait in *Silence* and *Tranquillity*, till God is pleas'd to work his Will in us; and that when the Soul is thus in the State of *Inaction*, and intirely abandons it self to God, then it is that God speaks to and operates in it. What they say concerning Man's *Nothingness*, does not hinder but that most of them pretend to be in a State of Perfection, and look upon the rest of Christians as carnal Men who are yet in Darknes, and who never tasted that which they call the *Heavenly Gift*. I might relate here their refining upon Divine Love, and upon Prayer; but what I have said is sufficient

cient to discover the Spirit and Character Cause  
of Fanaticism. II.

I am far from charging all those who hold these Opinions with Hypocrisy and Impiety; I am persuaded that there are good Men amongst them, who are not sensible of their Errors: so that I cannot but blame the Severity which is us'd towards them in some Places, and the odious Imputations that are cast upon them in order to vilify them all, without distinction. If they err, it is, for the most part, thro Weakness and Prepossession, rather than thro Malice.

Nay, it may be said in their behalf, that these Illusions would not have grown so common, if there had not been a general, and, in some measure, an incurable Corruption in the World. But they saw every where a prodigious decay of Piety, and little hope of amendment: For what may we not say of the present State of Christianity? There is in many Places an ignorant and superstitious Clergy and People, whose whole Religion consists in Ceremonies and in Devotions, which are merely external, and often ridiculous; above all, there appears in those Places a Deluge of Immorality. Is it then to be wonder'd at that Quietism and Fanaticism should rear up their Heads in such Places? These gross Abuses do not indeed prevail every where, but generally speaking there is but little of true Piety among Christians;

**Part I.** tians; there is scarce any Order or Discipline left amongst them, Men live as they please, the Sacraments are profan'd, the Precepts of the Gospel are trampled under foot, Charity and Honesty are almost entirely banish'd: No Man sets about the redressing of these Disorders; Churchmen make it their capital Business to maintain their Disputes and their Tenets, and they apply themselves but faintly to the reforming of Manners. Religion being on this foot, many, who had good Intentions, could not but perceive that this was not true and genuine Christianity: But because they saw no likelihood of things being brought to a better posture, or because they wanted Capacity to find out the Occasions and Remedies of so great an Evil; or, lastly, because they were Men of weak parts, they hearken'd to those who propos'd to them this mystical Piety.

This is the Cause of the Progress of Fanaticism, and the Reason why some Persons of Verrue and Piety are engag'd in that Party; and therefore the true way to reclaim them would be to re-establish Order in the Church, and to labour for the Reformation of Manners. As long as these are neglected, all the Precautions and Methods us'd against Fanaticks by the Clergy, or by the Magistrate, will either prove unsuccessful, or be found contrary to the Spirit of Christianity.

But

But after all, this Spirit of Fanaticism is highly pernicious: For first it opens a Gap to all manner of Licentiousness; not to mention the Mischiefs which may redound from thence upon Civil Society, Mystical Piety is a large Fountain of Illusions; it leads Men into endless Errors, and it is apt to turn all Religion upside down: for as it is lodg'd only in inward Sentiments, it cannot happen otherwise, but that vast Numbers of Men, who either want Knowledg or Strength of Parts, will take the wandrings of their own Fancies for Divine Inspirations. I know that some of those contemplative Men acknowledg the Scripture for the Rule of their Faith, and read it carefully; but the mischief is, that thro their Prejudices they fix a wrong Sense upon it, so that what they read does but confirm them in their Errors. Their Expositions are very singular; they do not affix to Words the same Ideas which other Men do; they forsake the literal sense, to run after mystical Explications sutable to their preconceiv'd Notions; they reject or make very light of those Helps which the Knowledg of Languages, History, and the Scope of Sacred Writers afford; and it is one of their Principles, that Women, Mechanicks, and the most simple People are able to understand the Scripture as well, if not better, than the most learned Doctors.

Cause II.



## Part I.

2. Fanaticism is an Evil which is hardly to be remedied: A Heretick, or a profane Person, may sooner be undeceiv'd, than a Man intoxicated with Mystical Devotion; for these will reason, but the other will hearken to no Reasoning; so that he is Proof against all the Arguments which can be offer'd to him. It is in vain to dispute with People, who look on all those who are not of their mind as ignorant Men, who think themselves illuminated above the rest of Mankind, and who return no other Answer to the Objection urg'd against them, but that they are otherwise perswaded in their minds. There is no good to be done upon them, either by Reasoning or by Sense, of which they make but little use; or even by the Scripture, wherein they seek nothing less than the literal meaning.

3. Tho mystical Men profess a sublime Piety, yet their Principles favour Corruption more than one may be apt to imagine. How can we reconcile those Maxims concerning *Contemplation, Inanition and Silence* with that Activity, Zeal, and Fervor which the Scripture recommends? If a Man is a mere Nothing, if he is to wait patiently till God works his Will in him, and speaks to his Soul, it is in vain to exhort Men, and it would be to no purpose for them to use any endeavours on their part. Besides, that Contempt of outward means which the *Mysticks* express

express, makes way for a total Neglect of Devotion, introduces Disorder and Licentiousness, and is directly opposite to God's Design, who thought fit to prescribe the use of those means. I might add, that the Principles of Fanaticism are commodious enough for Sinners, so that I do not wonder, that some of them should go over to that Party. A Devotion which consists in acknowledging a man's own *Nothingness*, or in *Contemplation* and *Silence*, is much more acceptable to a corrupt Person, than an exact Morality, which obliges a man to do Acts of Repentance, to put his own hand to the Work, and to set about the reforming of his Life, and the practising of Christian Vertues.

Upon the whole matter, Fanaticism makes Religion contemptible, because the Men of the World confound true with mystical Piety. They fancy that a Man cannot be devout, without being something visionary and enthusiastical, and that Devotion does not well agree with Sense and Reason.

The Prejudices I have mention'd in this Chapter, are not the only ones which foment and cherish Corruption; some others might have been added, but they may more conveniently be rang'd under the Titles of some of the following Chapters. What I have said in this, farther shews the necessity of good Instruction; which may conquer these Prejudices, and give Men true Notions of Religion and Piety.

## C A U S E III.

*The Maxims and Sentiments which are made use of to authorize Corruption.*

**I**T has been shewn in the two preceding Chapters, that Men are generally involv'd in Ignorance, and that they entertain such Notions concerning Religion and Piety, as must of necessity maintain Corruption in the World. But they are likewise possess'd with divers particular Maxims and Sentiments, which lead directly to Libertinism. A modern Author very well observes, \* *That People are not only very little acquainted with the Extent of that Parity which the Gospel requires, but that they are besides full of Maxims, incomparably more pernicious than Errors of pure Speculation.* These Maxims do the more certainly produce Corruption, because they are us'd to authorize and countenance it; and in fact, Mens Blindness and Licentiousness are come to that pass, that not being contented with the Practice of Vice, they do besides plead Authority for an ill Life. They proceed so far as to defend the Cause of Corruption; they dispute with those that condemn them,

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\* New Moral Essays, Tom. I. in the Preface.

and they vent such Maxims and Sentiments, as (if we believe them) will justify, or at least excuse all their Disorders. I could not omit here the examining of those Maxims, since their Effect is so pernicious; I shall therefore observe them as the third Cause of Corruption.

The Maxims and Sentiments which favour Corruption are of two sorts: Some are visibly profane and impious, such are a great many Maxims of the Libertines, which go for current in the World; but there are others which Men pretend to draw from Religion. I shall insist particularly upon the latter, because as they are taken from Religion it self, they are by much the more dangerous. When profane People undertake to defend Vice with Maxims which are manifestly impious, we stand upon our guard against them, and we may confute them by the Maxims of Religion. But when they employ Religion and the Truths of it in the defence of Vice, the danger of being seduc'd is infinitely greater.

I shall reduce the Maxims which are made use of to authorize Corruption, to these four Orders.

I rank those in the *First* Order, by which Men endeavour to prove, that Holiness is not absolutely necessary.

The *Second* Order contains those which tend to shew, that the Practice of Holiness is impossible.



Part I. The *Third* comprehends those which insinuate, that 'tis dangerous for a Man to apply himself to good Works.

The *Fourth* and the *Last* includes those which are alledg'd to excuse Corruption.

But as 'tis not less necessary to know the Remedies against Corruption, than to discover the Causes of it, I shall not only mention, but as I go on confute those Maxims.

I. Altho nothing is more clearly asserted in the Gospel, than the necessity of Good Works, yet Christians entertain many Opinions which destroy this Necessity, and which consequently open a door to Licentiousness. The Necessity of good Works cannot be overthrown but one of these two ways: either by saying, that God does not require them; or else by maintaining, that tho God requires them, yet a Man may be sav'd without the Practice of them.

1. In order to prove that God does not require Sanctity and good Works, as a Condition absolutely necessary to Salvation, these two Maxims are abus'd: 1. *That we are not sav'd by our Works.* And, 2. *That Faith is sufficient to Salvation.* The first of these Maxims is intended to exclude good Works, and by the second Men would substitute another Mean for obtaining Salvation. I refer the discussing of these two Maxims to the next Chapter, because they are drawn from the Holy Scripture.

2. Men

2. Men endeavour to persuade themselves, that tho they neglect Holiness, yet for all that they shall not be excluded from Salvation. And that which contributes most to flatter them in this Imagination, is, First, The Notion they have form'd to themselves of the Mercy of God; *God, say they, is good, and will not judg us with the utmost Rigour.* This is said every day, and it makes every body hope for Salvation. The Divine Mercy indeed is, without question, the only ground we have to hope for Salvation; but the vilest Affront we can offer to that Mercy, is to make it an occasion of Security: Because God is good and merciful, must not we therefore endeavour to please him? May we freely offend him because he is good, and we hope he will forgive us?

Those who reason at this rate, understand very little what the Divine Mercy is: They must suppose that it extends indifferently to all men, without any regard to their Obedience or Disobedience; but this Supposition is evidently false, and contrary to the Holy Scripture. The Effects of God's Mercy are promis'd only to those who fear him and depart from evil; and by consequence it is a false and pernicious Maxim to say, *So much Holiness is not necessary; God is good, and he will not mark severely what is done amiss.* This is to ascribe to God an Easiness and a Connivance, utterly unbecom-

Part I. ing the Sovereign Judg of the World.

~ 'Tis said besides, *That God will not judg us rigorously.* That indeed is true, God is indulgent towards us, and the Gospel is a Covenant of Grace, in which God has a great regard to our present Condition and Weakness; but 'tis likewise certain, that God will judg us according to the rigour of the Covenant of Grace, and that no Salvation is to be had for those who do not fulfil the Condition of the Gospel. Now this Condition is a true Faith, inciting us to Holiness. This must be granted, and we must acknowledg the necessity of performing this Condition, and of leading a Holy Life, or else the Gospel is but a Jest: and we must say, that God does not speak seriously in it; that indeed he prescribes certain Conditions, that he commands and threatens, but that nothing of all this is to be strictly understood; so that tho a Man does not comply with the Conditions which God requires, yet he shall feel the Effects of his Clemency. If this is true, there is an end of the Christian Religion.

2. It will no doubt be reply'd, *That provided a Man repents, and asks God's Forgiveness, he shall be sav'd.* This is an unquestionable Truth; so by Repentance we mean that which the Gospel requires, and which consists in a sincere Detestation of Sin, in true Conversion and Amendment of Life. But this is false, if by Repentance we mean only

only a general Confession of Sins, accompany'd with some sense of Grief and Fear, whereby Sinners hope at the hour of Death to atone for all the disorders of a vicious Life. I would shew here that this is no saving Repentance, but that I am to handle this matter purposely in another Chapter.

If Men commonly neglect those things which are not very necessary, they apply themselves much less to those which they think to be impossible. Now this is the Notion which Men commonly have of Piety. It is said first, *That it is impossible for a Man to be so Holy, as to do that which God commands.* A great many like the Precepts of the Gospel very well, and acknowledg their Justice and Excellency; *Would to God,* say they, *we could live thus, but we are not able to do it:* And being possess'd with this Opinion, they use no endeavour to practise those Duties which they own to be just; or to attain to that Holiness, to which God calls them. And indeed what Man would attempt that which he looks upon as impossible?

Now what is said of Man's Incapacity to do good, is very true, when we speak of Man, consider'd barely as Man, in the corrupt State of Nature. But the Question is, Whether those whom God has rescu'd out of that State, and call'd to the Communion of the Gospel, are incapable to arrive at that degree of Holiness, which he requires of them? The Apostles give us another No-



Part I. tion of those who know and believe in Jesus  
 Christ: They represent to us indeed the miserable Condition in which Men naturally are, and the Greatness of their Corruption; but they tell us at the same time, that Christ is come to deliver them from that State,  
 \* *That a Christian can do all things thro Christ that strengtheneth him: † That he is perfect and thoroly furnisb'd to all good Works: || That he who loves God keeps his Commandments, and overcomes the World.* This plainly imports, that we are no longer in that State of Corruption and Death, wherein Man, being left to himself, is a slave to Sin; or at least that we ought to be no longer in that State, after all that which the Grace of God has done for us. It is the greatest Injury that can be done to Christ and his Grace to say, That his Coming, his Death, his Gospel, and his Spirit are not able to sanctify Men; and that after they are redeem'd and adopted by God, it is impossible for them to be good, and to do what he commands.

If this was true, where would be the Power of the Christian Religion, and what could we think of God's proceeding when he addresses his Commandments to us? At this rate he gives us a Law, not that we should keep it, but rather to convince us that we cannot observe it. In this case, what will become of our Saviour's Precepts, and

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\* Phil. IV. 13. † 2 Tim. II. 21. || 1 John V. 3, 4.  
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what are we to think of those pure and exalted Morals he has left us? Evangelical Holiness will be nothing else but an imaginary and unpracticable Sanctity. Those Ideas of Perfection will be but mere Ideas, without any reality; like those of that Philosopher, who form'd a fine Scheme of the best Government of a Commonwealth, but it was a Project which could never be executed. It were to be wish'd we might remember that, Thanks be to God, we are no longer Heathens, and that Men should be encourag'd, and not dishearten'd, by extravagant Maxims and Discourses; which is the imitating those cowardly Spies, who after they had view'd the Land of *Canaan*, went about to despirit the *Israelites*, and to persuade them, that the Conquest of that Land was impossible.

2. It is not only said, That we are not able to be so Holy as the Gospel requires; but it is added besides, *That God would not have us be so; that he makes use of Sin to keep us humble, and to make us feel the constant need we have of his Grace, as well as to kindle in us the desire of a better and more perfect Life.* This Maxim represents Corruption as a thing unavoidable, agreeable to the Will of God, and in some measure useful. But what can be more false than to pretend, *that God would not have us to be Holy?* Why then does he command us to be so? Why does St. Paul say, *This is the Will of God, to wit,*  
your

Part I. *your* \* *Sanctification*? What can be meant by these words of St. Peter, † *As he who has call'd you is holy, be ye also holy in all manner of Conversation; for it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy*? If it be said, that God would have us to be holy, but not perfectly holy, as we shall be in Heaven; I ask no more: Who did ever pretend that we ought to be as holy in this World as we are to be in the Life to come? Nothing else is requir'd of Men, but that they should be as holy as God would have them to be, and as holy as his Grace enables them to be in this Life. To alledg against this, *That God would not have us be so holy*, is a ridiculous Evasion, which implies a Contradiction. Besides, this Maxim, taken in that Sense, which it first offers to the Mind, seems to make God the Author of Sin; for it supposes not only that God would not have us to be so holy, but, which is more strange, that he wills the contrary, that he has his Views, Designs, and Reasons why he should not permit us to attain that degree of Holiness to which the Gospel calls us: That is the meaning of these words, *That God makes use of Sin, to keep us humble, to make us feel the need we have of his Grace, and to make us long for another Life*. If it was said only, that God had some Reasons to permit Sin, such an Assertion would be true; but those

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\* 1 Theſ. IV. 3. † 1 Pet. I. 15, 16.

who alledg this Maxim to excuse them- Cause  
selves from obeying the Gospel, ascribe to III.  
God a positive Design, and a direct Inten-  
tion, which renders that Obedience impos-  
sible; which derogates from his Holiness  
and Justice, and which is manifestly con-  
trary to those Declaratiours which he him-  
self has made in Scripture. It it were fur-  
ther said, that our Sins ought to humble  
us, and that they should serve to make us  
wiser and more circumspect for the time to  
come, and to raise in us a longing after a  
happier State; this would be very reasona-  
ble. But it does not follow from thence,  
that we are to ascribe to God those Views  
and Intentions which this Maxim ascribes  
to him. There is a vast difference between  
the Design which God proposes to him-  
self, and the Event of Things: These two  
should never be confounded, neither ought  
the natural Effect of Sin to be confounded  
with the Consequences of it. The natural  
Effect of Sin can be no other but Evil, if  
the Consequences of it are not always fa-  
tal, and if Men reap some advantage from  
it, that is, as we say, by Accident. How-  
ever God has no need of Vice to form us  
to Humility; he has other means to hum-  
ble us, and to make us feel the need we  
stand in of his Grace, without being neces-  
sitated to let us live under the Dominion of  
Sin, to produce those Dispositions in us.  
And there remain still even in the very ho-  
liest



Part I. lieft Men, matter enough for them to have recourse to the Divine Mercy, and to aspire to a better Life, notwithstanding all the progress they can make in Holiness. This will be fully clear'd in the Sequel of this Chapter.

3. Here is another Maxim which is pretty common ; it is said, *That this World is the Place of Corruption, that this Life is the Time of Sin, and that Holiness is reserv'd for Heaven.* Mens Minds are so infected with this Imagination, that we hear it said every day, even by those who have some Piety, *That we live in this World only to offend God, and that we do nothing but sin.* But certainly nothing is more contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel than this : for tho it is true, in a sound Sense, that this World is the place of Corruption, and that Sin will never be intirely abolish'd but in Heaven ; yet that does by no means excuse us from serving and fearing God as long as we live here. The first thing a Christian ought to know, is, that God has plac'd him in this World, not to offend, but to glorify and serve him. The Gospel tells us every where, that this Life is the time which God gives us to sanctify our selves in ; that this Earth is the Place where Christian Vertues are to be practis'd ; that now is the time to labour, *to walk, to fight, and to sow*, if we intend to obtain Salvation ; and that whoever neglects these Duties shall be

shut

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strate, that the Practice of it is not refer'd  
to another Life. The greatest part of the  
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says in his Epistle to Titus, chap. II. there  
he declares, *That the Grace of God, which  
brings Salvation, teaches Men to live soberly,  
righteously and godly in this present World;*  
that is, in this Life, and upon Earth; and  
then he adds, *looking for that blessed Hope,  
and the glorious Appearing of the great God,  
and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* He makes a  
distinction between the Duty and the Hope  
of a Christian, between this World and  
that which is to come. This Life is the  
Time, and this World the Place, wherein  
we ought to practise Temperance, Justice  
and Godliness. It must not be ask'd, where  
the Difference then lies between this Life  
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Nay, we may draw an Argument from the nature of Holiness it self, to demonstrate, that the Practice of it is not refer'd to another Life. The greatest part of the Duties which God prescribes, such as Repentance, Patience, Chastity, Sobriety, Almsgiving and Hope, cannot be practis'd in Heaven: Here then is the Time, the Place, and the Opportunity to perform these Duties. Let us reflect upon what St. Paul says in his Epistle to Titus, chap. II. there he declares, *That the Grace of God, which brings Salvation, teaches Men to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World; that is, in this Life, and upon Earth; and then he adds, looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* He makes a distinction between the Duty and the Hope of a Christian, between this World and that which is to come. This Life is the Time, and this World the Place, wherein we ought to practise Temperance, Justice and Godliness. It must not be ask'd, where the Difference then lies between this Life and the other, between Grace and Glory? for the difference is great and sensible enough



Part I. nough in other respects. In the next Life we shall be perfectly holy, our Holiness will be of another nature than it is here; we shall be like the Angels; and as we shall practise no longer a great many Duties which we practise here on Earth, so we shall exercise many Vertues which cannot be exercis'd in this Life.

4. I ought not to omit here another Maxim, which is not only very common, but is likewise most pernicious, by reason of the use that is made of it. Some say, *That there was always, and that there will always be Corruption, that this is the way of the World, that Men will always be Men, and that the World will not change.* It is necessary to dwell a little upon this Maxim, because it is specious, and tends, as well as the former, to make Men believe that Corruption is necessary and unavoidable. It has besides a general Influence upon the Subject-Matter and Design of this Book; for it is to little purpose to descant upon the Sources of Corruption, if there is no Amendment to be hop'd for. I have four things to say upon this Maxim.

1. The Inference which is made from it is absurd; for tho an Evil is general, it does not follow that it is to no purpose to endeavour to keep our selves free from it, unless it were an Evil from which Men could not possibly preserve themselves. There have been always, and there will al-  
ways

ways be Diseases in the World; and yet no Man hitherto has been so weak as to maintain that the Precautions and Remedies, which are us'd against Diseases, are altogether useless. Thus tho Corruption reigns in the World, yet that does not hinder but Men ought to use those means which God affords them to that end.

2. This Maxim is founded upon a false Supposition: for tho it is true that there has been always, and there always will be Corruption in the World; yet it ought not to be suppos'd that this Corruption is alike at all times, or that things are always to be in the same state they now are in. This were a false Supposition, and contrary to Experience, as may easily be prov'd with respect to the Time past, the present, and the future. First, when we reflect upon past Ages, we cannot say that all Times have been alike in reference to Religion. It is not to be deny'd, but that before Christ's Coming the World was plung'd in a general Corruption, and that the State of it has been considerably alter'd by the preaching of the Gospel. Can any one deny but that the Primitive Church was purer than the Church which we find in the ninth or tenth Century? At this Day, tho there is a general Dissoluteness, yet there is more or less Corruption in some Places than in others. It is true in fact, that where the Gospel is duly preach'd, and

where

**Part I.** where there is some Order and Discipline left, there appears more Piety and Religion than in other Places. As for the time to come, we must not think it impossible to restore things to a better State, or imagine that the World will always continue as it is, tho the Means were us'd which God has appointed to reform it; for this will no sooner be done, but Corruption will abate, as I hope to make it appear in the second Part of this Book.

3. This Maxim is directly contrary to the Word of God. The Scripture often speaks of the Corruption of the World, but does it always in such a manner, as gives us to understand that Christians may and ought to renounce it. St. Paul speaks of the sinful Courses which the World lies in, *Eph. II.* but he supposes that the *Ephesians* did no longer follow those Courses after they were converted to the Christian Religion. The same Apostle commands us, *\* not to be conform'd to this present World.* And St. James, when he describes the Spirit and Character of that *† pure and undefil'd Religion* which is acceptable to God, he tells us, among other things, that it consists in *a Man's keeping himself unspotted from the World.*

4. In the last place, this Maxim is extremely dangerous. In that Sense and Design in

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*† Rom. XII. 2. † James I. 2, 7.*

†

which

which it is propos'd, it leads to Impiety, it robs Religion of all its Power, and it furnishes Libertines with a Plea, which do's intirely justify them. For in short, either Corruption may be remedied, and Men may be reduc'd to a more Christian Life; or they may not. If it cannot be remedied, this Maxim is true, and profane Men are in the right. But in that case I say it again, Religion is but a Name: for if no stop can be given to Corruption, if things must still go on at the same rate; why do we talk of Religion, or why do we preach the Gospel? We may teach and exhort as long as we please, but for all that, there will be neither more nor less Sin; Men will always be what they are, and the World will not alter. What notion must this give us of the efficacy of Christianity, or of the sincerity of its Precepts, Promises and Threatnings? I grant then that Corruption is great, that the course of the World is very bad, and that in all probability there will always be wickedness upon Earth. But that this Corruption should be always the same, so that no Reformation can be hop'd; is what cannot be maintain'd without affronting Religion, without introducing Fatality, and extinguishing all Zeal among Christians.

By the Maxims we have hitherto examin'd, Men endeavour to prove that the practice of Holiness is either of no great necessity, or that it is impossible. But there

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Part I. are some others, which represent the study of Vertue as dangerous; so that here vicious Men do not stand barely upon the defensive part, but they attack their Adversaries, who recommend the Duties of Holiness.

1. They pretend that we cannot insist so much upon Works, without obscuring the Glory of the divine Mercy. *We must ascribe all, say they, to Mercy, and nothing to our own Righteousness.* There is no true Christian but acknowledges, That our Salvation is entirely owing to the divine Mercy; and rejects the Opinion which attributes any Merit to good Works. It is that Mercy which gave us Christ for our Redeemer, and our Salvation is founded upon that Redemption. It is that Mercy which pardons the Sins of those who believe and repent, and which bears with the infirmities of regenerate Christians. And it is from the same Mercy that we expect that glorious and unmerited Reward, which is laid up in Heaven for good Men. All these are so many acts of the pure Mercy of God. But as we have shew'd that the Mercy which saves us do's not excuse us from good Works, to the necessity of good Works do's not lessen in the least the Riches of God's Mercy. Unless we admit that there are Contradictions in Scripture; we must acknowledg that the Doctrine of Sanctification do's perfectly agree with the Doctrine of Grace.

And

And in truth, to say, That God gave Cause  
 up his Son to Death, in order to save Men; III.  
 and that he will grant remission of Sins, and eternal Happiness to every believing and repenting Sinner; is as much as can be said to magnify the divine Mercy: Except we should pretend that God would be more merciful, if he did indifferently save all Mankind, and reward Vice and Vertue alike; but this would be a horrid Thought, and no less than downright Blasphemy. Then Sinners might say indeed, *Let us continue in Sin, that Grace may abound.*

Let us suppose that a Prince pardons a rebellious Subject, and that he is ready to confer the greatest honours and benefits upon him, on condition that this Subject shall accept of the Pardon offer'd him, and shall relapse no more into the same Crime; would any Man be so unreasonable as to say, that the Clemency of that Prince would be much greater if he did grant his favours to this Rebel, tho he should persist in his Crime? And yet this is the same thing which some Men would have God do. It is very strange that any one should think to honour God by such Conceits, as do not only injure his Mercy, but his other Perfections too. Because God is Merciful, must we forget that he is Holy, Just and Good? It is said, *That we must ascribe all to the Mercy of God*; what then, must we have no regard to his Holiness, his Justice

Part I. and his Truth? Must what the Scripture tells of these last Perfections, be faintly and tenderly expounded, whilst we press and scrue up to the highest pitch what it says of Mercy?

As to what is added, *That we ought to ascribe nothing to our own Righteousness*; it is unquestionably true. But do we ascribe any thing to Man, when we say, that he is bound to do his Duty, and to accept the favour which God is pleased to bestow upon him? Can any man say, that the Rebel I mention'd just now, is the Author of his own happiness, and that he deserves the Pardon granted him by his Prince; because he accepts of it, and fulfils the condition upon which it is offer'd? What reason then has a Man to value himself upon his own Righteousness, or to arrogate any merit to himself, since he is indebted to the Grace of God, both for the beginnings and the progress of his Sanctification? In short, we should take heed, that for fear of ascribing any thing to Man, we may not rob the divine Grace of what belongs to it, by not acknowledging its Gifts and Power in a regenerate Man.

2. Here is another Maxim, which is alledg'd in confirmation of the preceding, and which aims at the same mark; It is this, *That we must not speak so much of good Works, lest we inspire Men with Pride and Presumption.* And to support this Maxim, it is usual to

run out upon Mens inclination to Pride, Cause  
and upon the heinousness of that Sin. But **III.**  
this Maxim proceeds only from the false and  
confus'd notions which Men have about Re-  
ligious matters.

Either this Maxim has no sense at all, or  
else it amounts to this: That whosoever ap-  
plies himself to Holiness and good Works, is  
in danger of falling into Pride; and that a  
neglect of Vertue contains a Man within  
the bounds of Humility. Which is as  
much as to say, that a Man may be holy  
without Humility, and humble without  
Holiness. Two things which are the most  
ridiculous and contradictory that can be as-  
serted. At this rate it would be a dan-  
gerous thing to be a good Man, and  
more safe to be otherwise. By pursuing  
Vertue and Holiness a Man draws near to  
Sin, and to the greatest of Sins, I mean  
Pride; and by neglecting Holiness, he at-  
tains Humility, which is one of the chief  
Christian Vertues. If this is true, all that  
we call Vice or Vertue is but an empty  
sound. It is much that Men should not see  
there can be no Holiness without Humi-  
lity, nor Humility without Holiness; that  
where there is Holiness, there is Humility,  
and Pride is excluded; and that where  
Pride is, there is no true Sanctification.  
The holier a Man grows, he becomes the  
more humble; and he is so far from coming  
the nearer to Pride by proceeding in Holi-  
ness,



*Part I.* ness, that on the contrary he removes the farther from it. The instance of our Blessed Saviour, who was both perfectly holy, and perfectly humble; is a proof that Humility is not incompatible with Holiness.

But the nature of Humility is not well understood. There are many who conceive no other Humility but that which arises from the disorders of a vicious and irregular Life. So that when they would humble good Men, they rank them among the vilest Sinners; they make them say, that there is nothing but wickedness and abomination in them; and that they have deserv'd eternal Damnation by innumerable Sins which they have committed, every moment of their Lives, and even by the best Actions they have done. The strongest Expressions and the most excessive Hyberboles, are scarce sufficient to exaggerate the number and greatness of their Sins. But there is enough of other inducements and motives to Humility, without thus confounding Vice and Vertue. It would be a pretty sort of humility for a Man to live in Sin, to be at defiance with God, to do nothing for his sake, and then with all this to confess himself a miserable Sinner.

Pride and Presumption should not be encourag'd; but yet under pretence of humbling Men, we ought not to turn them into Blocks, or to confound a good Man with a profligate Sinner. When we inveigh against the

the Pride of Man, we ought not to sink his Cause  
 Courage; for that would immediately make III.  
 him incapable of any thing that is good. ~~~~~  
 Under colour of honouring God, we must  
 not dishonour his Workmanship, speak  
 slightingly of his Gifts, and overlook his  
 Image, in those who bear it in a double  
 Capacity; as they are Men, and as they  
 are Christians. It is a piece of Pride to ar-  
 rogate any thing to our selves which we  
 have not, or which do's not come from us;  
 but it is a false Humility, it is Hypocrisy,  
 not to acknowledg the Graces of God in us.

It is objected; *That some presume much upon themselves, that Man is very apt to flatter himself;* and to this purpose, the *Pharisees* are mention'd, *who trusted in their own Righteousness.* To this I reply, That those presumptuous Persons are Hypocrites, who have no solid Piety. I say, that the Grace of God beats down that Pride, and that the *Pharisees* had nothing but an external Righteousness, a deceitful and hypocritical Sanctity. It is therefore without reason that Men cry down Holiness, and pretend that the study of good Works begets Presumption, because there have been, and there still are Hypocrites. If we may say where Pride is to be found; it is in those wild and extravagant Moralists, who make all these Objections. Those Men ascribe very little to good Works, and yet what opinion do they not entertain of themselves?

Part I. They fancy themselves God's Favourites, and the truly humble Men; and all this by virtue of their stock of Confidence: And which is yet worse, they judg rashly of those who endeavour to live better than themselves, and they make bold to call them *Pharisees* and *Hypocrites*. Is not this a most intolerable presumption and boldness?

3. The Abettors of Corruption insist mightily upon this Maxim, *That excess in all things is to be condemn'd; and that Piety, when carried too far, degenerates into Superstition and Hypocrisy*. It is not only the Libertines speak after this manner; many who would be thought wise and rational Men, use the same Language. They pretend to Vertue, they condemn Atheism and Impiety; but they likewise condemn those who would tie Men to the strict practice of the Duties of Holiness. *In all things, say they, a just Medium is to be observ'd*. The worst of it is, that some Moralists give an occasion to these Opinions, by the Pictures they make of hypocritical and superstitious Men. They represent them as Men, who carry all the appearances of devout Persons; they tell us that Hypocrisy goes beyond true Devotion; and they are not aware that by this they turn Religion into ridicule, and render it odious.

This Maxim as well as the former, is founded upon the unaccurate Notions, which most People have concerning Morals; for

for it will appear to every Man who examines this matter with some care, 1. That Cause  
Piety can never be carried too far, and that III.  
we can never do too much in obedience to  
God, and in compliance with our Duty. And  
2. That Piety, and Superstition or Hypo-  
crisy, are things opposite to one another : So  
that to imagine that a diligent and earnest  
application to Piety, leads Men to Supersti-  
tion or Hypocrisy, is a monstrous absurdity,  
and the highest Contradiction that can be  
maintain'd. It is just as if one should say,  
that Gold or Silver by being very much re-  
fin'd might at last degenerate into Lead or  
Earth. How or which way can Piety turn  
to Superstition or Hypocrisy? This is a  
thing that cannot be conceiv'd. As long as  
Men reason upon true Principles, they may  
pursue them with assurance, and without  
fear of running themselves into false or dan-  
gerous Consequences. Men will never fall  
into Superstition or Hypocrisy by the prac-  
tice of Vertue. So far from it, that the  
more true Piety a Man has, he will find  
himself at a greater distance from Super-  
stition and Hypocrisy : And a superstitious  
Person is so far from out-stripping a good  
Man, that on the contrary he comes infi-  
nitely behind him. Solid Vertue is always  
attended with these two Characters : First  
it is sincere and from the Heart, and by that  
it destroys Hypocrisy instead of producing  
it. And then Secondly, it is well inform'd  
and



**Part I.** and rational, it fills the Mind and Heart with true Notions, with great and elevated Views; and so it sets Men at an infinite distance from those mean, ignorant and trifling Things which the superstitious are taken up withal. Let us conclude then, that hypocritical and superstitious Men are so far from having too much Piety, that they have none at all. If it happens sometimes, as it certainly does, that Men who have a sound and honest Heart, are somewhat given to an odd kind of Devotion, which in some respects favours of Superstition; this do's not proceed from Piety it self, but from a defect in those that profess it, who may either want Knowledg or force of Mind.

**IV.** Tho Men endeavour to defend Corruption with those Maxims I have related; yet as these Maxims may easily be confuted, so they are sometimes forc'd to acknowledg, That the depravation of the Age is great, and that the Life of Christians is not agreeable to the Rules of their Religion. But for all this, they do not give up the Cause. They betake themselves to various excuses, by which they think to exempt themselves from their Duty, or at least to lessen and extenuate the Sin of not observing it. These excuses must needs maintain them in Secularity; they are besides very common, and even pass frequently for good and just. Therefore I think it may be proper to refute

fute them too in this Chapter. It would Cause  
 be a difficult Task to reckon up all the Ex- III.  
 cuses which are alledg'd in the behalf of ~~~~~  
 Corruption, and to trace out all the dou-  
 blings and artifices of Man's Heart upon  
 this matter. It will be sufficient to men-  
 tion those which are most general and ordi-  
 nary.

I. It is customary to excuse Corruption,  
 by saying, *That we are Men, and not Angels*,  
 This excuse might be destroy'd by what has  
 been already said, but yet it may be useful  
 to dwell a little upon it. It is said then,  
*That we are Men, and not Angels*; and that  
 is a most certain Truth: but there is no  
 ground to justify or excuse by that the ill  
 Lives of Christians. For first, that very  
 thing that we are Men, obliges us to the  
 practice of Vertue, instead of exempting us  
 from it. *We are Men*, and as such we have  
 Reason which distinguishes us from Brutes,  
 and a Conscience which discerns between  
 Good and Evil: we ought then to live ac-  
 cording to Reason, and the Principles of  
 Conscience; and to do that which becomes  
 the Nature of Man. *We are Men*, and by  
 consequence Mortal; we know we are not  
 to live always in this World; and knowing  
 this, we must either think of another Life,  
 or propose to our selves no other end than  
 that of Beasts, which follow their Instinct  
 while they live, and then die never to live  
 again. *We are Men*, but we are not Inde-  
 pendent,

Part I. pendent, we have a Creator and a Master; and as we are endu'd besides with Understanding, we are to give an account of our Actions before his Tribunal: It is therefore agreeable to the Nature of Man, to live like a Creature that depends upon God, and that must be judg'd. So that this Consideration, *that we are Men*, is so far from excusing, that it condemns Corruption.

But it may be said *that we are weak Men*. This is very true; our Nature is frail, and has besides a strong byass to evil. But God speaks to us as to weak Men; he commands us nothing but what is proportion'd to that state of Imperfection we are in. Besides, this excuse do's not at all become Christians. To say, *we are weak Men*, is to shew we have but little sense of God's kindness towards us. We are not only Men, but we are Christians too: and this quality raises us above the natural condition of Men; it makes us new Men and new Creatures. Why do we then forget the Glory to which God has exalted our Nature through Jesus Christ? Why would we still lie under the burden of frail and corrupt Nature?

It is further said, *that we are not Angels*. But neither is it necessary that we should be so, to do that which God commands us. When God gives us his Laws, he knows he gives them to Men; and therefore they are admirably suited to our present Condition in this World. If we were Angels, God would  
give

give us quite other Laws, the Gospel would Cause  
 be abolish'd, and the World should conti- III.  
 nue no longer in the state it is in. It is  
 therefore an absurd imagination to think  
 that one cannot perform the Duties of Re-  
 ligion without being of an Angelical Na-  
 ture.

Let us then no longer pretend, *That be-  
 cause we are Men we are too weak to observe the  
 Duties which Religion prescribes.* This excuse  
 charges God with injustice, as if he did re-  
 quire from us such things as are not agree-  
 able with our Nature and Condition; it is  
 injurious to the Gospel and to the Christian  
 Religion, as well as to the Grace of Christ,  
 and the Power of his Spirit; it is false, since  
 the Scripture declares, that Grace regene-  
 rates and strengthens us, and that it makes  
 us able to overcome the vicious inclinations  
 of our Nature, and to free our selves from  
 the dominion of Sin: And lastly, it is con-  
 trary to Experience; for those many Saints  
 and good Men, who practis'd the most  
 \* sublime and difficult Duties of Piety,  
 were Men as we are; and as the † sacred  
 Writers observe, they were subject to the  
 same infirmities with us, and many of them  
 perhaps had not those advantages which we  
 have.

2. It is often alledg'd as an excuse, *That no  
 Man is perfect, and that every one has his Faults.*

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\* James V. 17. † Heb. XII. 1.



**Part I.** This is said every day, and some pretend with that saying, to excuse every thing. Excuses for the most part have something of truth in them. This Proposition, *That no Man is perfect*, is very true in one sense, and altogether false in another.

No Man certainly is perfect, in the strict sense of that Word, or as it imports a full and accomplish'd Perfection, free from all defect; such a Perfection is to be had nowhere else but in Heaven. But there is a Perfection commenc'd or begun, of which a Man redeem'd and sanctify'd by Jesus Christ is capable. If it was not so, why should Christ and his Apostles exhort us *\* to be perfect*? Why should they tell us, *† that he who is born of God does not sin*? And that a Christian is *|| thorowly furnish'd to every good Work*? If you ask who those perfect Men are? I answer, That they are those who aspire to Perfection, in whom Sin do's not reign, who do not allow themselves in any vicious Habit, who sincerely and honestly apply themselves to Holiness, and have accustom'd themselves to practise the Duties of it with delight. Whoever is arriv'd at such a State, has attain'd that Perfection which is attainable in this Life, and to which Christians are call'd by the Gospel; tho there remain still in him

\* Mat. h. V. 48. Phil. I. 10. 1 Theff. V. 23. † 1 John V. 9. || 1 Cor. I. 8. 2 Tim. II. 21

some infirmities inseparable from human Cause Nature, and never totally to be rooted out III. before he gets to Heaven. We cannot be perfect in that first and strict Sense I have mention'd; but we may be perfect, and God will have us be so, in the second and Evangelical sense of that word.

It is therefore a frivolous excuse in the mouth of corrupt Men, to say, *That no Man is Perfect, and that we cannot attain to Perfection, or to the State of the Blessed in Heaven*; for this is to shift the Question, because that is not the Perfection which God requires. We ought not to fix a false and absurd Sense upon God's Commandments, that we may have a pretence not to obey them. The Question is, whether Christians are not bound to do that which God would have them do, and which they are able to do in this World; this is the Perfection to which he calls us.

We may apply very near the same answer to that other excuse, *That every body has his Faults*. There are Faults which do not destroy Piety; and God is graciously pleas'd not to impute such Faults to those that fear him; and in this sense, no man is free from Faults. But there is another sort of Faults, which should not be call'd bare Faults or Defects; those are the Vices and Passions which cannot consist with Piety, the great, the reigning, the habitual or deliberate Sins. True Christians are free from such Faults, and those

**Part I.** those who are not free from them, are not true Christians. If this Maxim, *That every one has his Faults*, is not thus explain'd; we must speak no longer of Vertue and Vice; for this excuse will serve for all Sins, and acquit every body. If a Man is given to Swearing, if he is Revengeful, Passionate, or False, if he commit Adultery, it is but saying, *Everyone has his Faults, and no Man is perfect*. Such Language from a Man full of vicious Habits is unsufferable. What dismal Consequences would not Libertines draw from such a Principle? We must therefore understand this Proposition, in the sense, and with those restrictions I have observ'd; and then it may be useful to comfort good Men, but it will never excuse those who are vicious.

3. Men endeavour to excuse themselves, by laying the Sins they commit upon the great number and the force of Temptations. *It is very hard*, say they, *to avoid Sin; we are so many ways drawn into it, Temptations are so strong and so frequent, that we must go out of the World, if we would preserve our Innocence*. Sometimes they impute to the Devil the Sins which they fall into; and at other times so great is their audaciousness, that they throw them upon God and his Providence.

All these excuses are trifling, and some of them are impious. For to begin with that which is borrow'd from the multitude and strength

Strength of Temptations; it is unreasonable to imagine, that the number of Temptations is so great, that their force is irresistible. Temptations are frequent, I confess; but it is an Error to think that there is nothing but Snares, and Sollicitations to Sin in the World. This would give us a strange Notion of God and of his Works, and in that case Man's Condition would be very miserable. It is certain on the other hand, that the Opportunities and Sollicitations to good are very common, especially in relation to Christians, whom an infinite Number of Objects and Motives call back to God, and to their Duty; even Temptations themselves give them occasions of doing good. God supplies them *abundantly with all things necessary to Life and Godliness*; as we are told, 2 Pet. I. Certainly we are to presume, that if God permits that Men should here meet with Temptations and Opportunities of undoing themselves, he offers them, on the other hand, many Occasions and Inducements to take care of their Salvation: So that the great number of Sollicitations to good, does already destroy the Excuse which is taken from the great number of Temptations.

Neither is it more reasonable to complain of the Strength of those Temptations. Such a Complaint is very unseemly from Christians, who are appointed to overcome the World, the Flesh, and all other Tempta-

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tions.



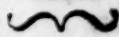
Part I. tions. When all things are well consider'd, it will appear that it is within our selves, in our own Negligence, and in the Perverseness of our Wills, that we ought to look for that which makes Temptations so strong and too hard for us. They have no more strength than we give them. St. James has decided this Question in such a manner as should stop the mouth of those who seek the Cause of Evil any where else but in their own Hearts; \* *Every Man, says he, is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and intic'd.*

The Devil has no more power over us than Temptations have; for he can but tempt us, but yet we are apt to ascribe to him a kind of Omnipotence. According to the vulgar Opinion, one would think that the Devil is the Author of all the Sins that are committed, that he is every where, and that Men are but his Instruments, which he uses at pleasure. If this was true, Men were indeed to be pity'd, and it would be some Excuse to those who live ill: The Scripture teaches us no such thing.

But the highest pitch of Temerity is, to charge God and Providence with our Sins: Thus some Men are wont to say, *Such a thing comes to pass, because God would have it so; and such another thing did not happen, because it did not please God that it should.*

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\* James I. 14.



When this Excuse is made with relation to Sin, it amounts to the most horrid of Blaspheemies; it lays upon God all the Evil that happens, and makes him the Author of it: For either this Excuse signifies nothing, or else it imports that God is the Cause of what happens, and not we. This must needs be the meaning of it, because Men pretend to excuse themselves with saying, *God would have it so*. In a word, here is no middle way; either the Cause of Sin is in Man, or it is not: If it is in Man, he can accuse no body else but himself; he cannot clear himself by saying, *God would or would not have it so*. If the Cause of Sin be not in Man, he is discharg'd, and all the Evil lights upon God. It is an astonishing thing, that Men, who believe God to be infinitely holy and just, can entertain such thoughts.

4. Another Excuse is often alledg'd, and it is fetch'd from common *Practice, Custom and Example*. That which is generally done is thought to be innocent, or at least pardonable: but the Greatness and the Universality of Corruption excuse no body; Custom and Example cannot make any thing lawful which is bad. Where there is an express Law, it is to no purpose to plead Practice to the contrary. Custom or Numbers exempt no Man from doing that which God commands, and will never protect him at the Day of Judgment. Custom and Example are so far from excusing Vice, that,

Part I. on the contrary, this very thing, that the Custom is bad, ought to make Men sensible how necessary it is to set about a good Reformation.

5. But if Men think that Example and Custom excuse them, they fancy themselves yet much more excusable when they can alledg the Examples and the Sins of good Men. The Libertines triumph here: *To what purpose is it, say they, to recommend Holiness so strictly, and to enforce it with such severe Penalties, when we see many good Men follow a course quite opposite to those Maxims, and to that exact Morality?* But they ought to consider that it is extream hard, or rather impossible, to know certainly whether a Man is truly a good Man or not. We cannot be assur'd of this, unless we knew mens Hearts, which belongs only to God. This Reflection does already defeat the Excuse which is borrow'd from the Sins of good Men. We frequently imagine the Person who sins to be a good Man, when he is but an Hypocrite, or an Atheist. Indeed Piety and Charity require that we should think the best of our Neighbours, especially of those in whom the Marks of solid Piety and Vertue appear; but neither Charity nor Piety obliges us to confound Vice with Godliness, or to call Evil Good. Sin is Sin, and ought to be condemn'd wherever we meet with it, and more particularly in those who pass for better Men than others.

thers. When Men, who seem to be pious, fall into such Sins as are inconsistent with Regeneration, we ought to think that those Men either give the Lye to their Character, and are not what we took them for; and then we may apply to them the Words of *Ezekiel*, Chap. xxxiii. v. 18. *When the Righteous turneth from his Righteousness, and committeth Iniquity, he shall even die thereby:* or else we must think, that tho they have some Piety, it is but weak as yet, so that they are not what they appear to be. But however, we ought to be positive in this, that the Examples and the Sins of others will excuse no Man in the sight of God.

6. Another very common Evasion, by which Men endeavour to excuse the Neglect and Omission of their Duty, is, *That they do not profess Devotion and Piety.* This is the ordinary Plea of Men of Business, of Worldlings, of young People, of Courtiers, of Military Men, and of a great many besides in all Conditions: *We do not pretend to Devotion*, they cry, *we are engag'd in the World.* And with this shift they not only think themselves excusable for neglecting Piety, but fancy they have a Right to neglect it, and that they do a great deal if they observe some of the external Duties of it. One can hardly believe that these Persons are in earnest when they make such an Excuse; it astonishes a Man to find Christians, who have the Confidence to say, that Piety



Part I. is not their Business, that they are of another Profession, and that they are not at leisure to be devout.

I fancy there are two Things which deceive those who alledg this Excuse: 1. That they do not well understand what Devotion is, they look upon it as a very austere and singular way of living; from whence they conclude, that but few People are able to apply themselves to it, and so they turn it over to the Clergy, to Women, or to those who have much leisure. I have observ'd already the falseness of this Prejudice, and shew'd that Piety is neither singular nor austere. 2. The other Cause of their Error seems to be this, that they do not consider that Piety is every body's Business, and that such is the nature of it, that it may be practis'd by all Men: Not but that secular Occupations and Callings do frequently obstruct Piety, and engage Men in Vice; and therefore a Christian should never be so taken up with the Affairs of this Life, as thereby to disable himself from performing the Duties of Christianity. But after all, a Man may live like a good Christian in any lawful Calling; and in that sense properly we are to understand the words of St. Paul, \* *That the Grace of God, which brings Salvation, has appear'd unto all Men, teaching them to live soberly,*

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\* Tit. II. 11.

*righteously and godly in this present World.*

Cause  
III.

Do those who plead it for an Excuse, *that they do not profess Devotion*, imagine that there are two ways to go to Heaven, the one for devout, and the other for worldly Men; the one narrow, and the other broad? Do they think that the Commandments of God do not concern all Men; that there is respect of Persons with God, or that he dispenses with his own Laws? How can they prove these Distinctions? Are not we all Christians? Have we not all been baptiz'd? Does not God give us all the same Laws? Or have some more reason to love God than others? And ought not the great Concern of our Salvation to be equally dear to us all?

I grant that those who have greater Opportunities, and more leisure than others, ought to make use of these Advantages; but I maintain at the same time, That none stand in greater need of Piety than those who say, *We are engag'd in the World, we do not pretend to Devotion.* It is because they are not devout, that their Condition is very sad; and the more they are engag'd in the World, the greater are the Temptations and Distractions to which they are liable. Now he that is expos'd to a Storm, had need take more care than he who enjoys a Calm.

These are the principal Maxims and Sentiments which are made use of to authorize

**Part I. Corruption.** Whoever takes notice of what is said and done in the World, must needs acknowledg that these and the like Maxims are vented abroad every Day; so that in order to obstruct the Progress of Corruption, it is absolutely necessary to undeceive Men in reference to these Sentiments, and to oppose that criminal Boldness which shamefully corrupts the Truths of Religion, and turns Impieties into religious Maxims and Articles of Faith.

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#### C A U S E IV.

##### *The Abuse of Holy Scripture.*

**I**T is a daring piece of Confidence to authorize Corruption with Maxims borrow'd from Religion; but it is the last degree of Audaciousness and Impiety to turn the Holy Scripture to such a scandalous use, and to seek, in that Divine Book, Pretences and Apologies for Vice; and yet the Extravagance and Temerity of many bad Christians come up to this pitch: several Declarations of the Word of God are made by them as many Maxims, under which they think to shelter themselves; and if we believe them, there is nothing, either in their Practice or Opinions, but what is agreeable to the Will and Intentions of God himself.

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This Abuse of the Scripture I design to Cause shew, in this Chapter, to be one of the IV. Causes of Corruption, and it cannot be too seriously consider'd.

The Passages of Scripture which are abus'd to this purpose, may be reduced to these four Heads: The *First* comprehends the Places which are brought against the Necessity of good Works. Under the *Second* we will examine those Declarations of Scripture, by which some endeavour to prove, That all Men, without exception, are in a State of Corruption which subjects them to Sin. In the *Third* place we shall answer the Arguments drawn from the Examples of those Saints, whose Sins are recorded in Scripture. And *Lastly*, we shall make some Reflections upon those Scriptures, in which the Divine Mercy is promis'd to the greatest Sinners.

There are Divine Passages in Scripture, which being ill understood, lead many into this Persuasion, that good Works are not of absolute Necessity. And First, nothing is more confidently alledg'd to this purpose than what we read in many places, \* *That we are justify'd by Faith, and not by our Works.* No Doctrine is more clearly and expressly deliver'd in the Gospel than that of Justification by Faith; but it is a perverting of this Doctrine to conclude from it, that Salvation may be obtain'd without good

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\* Rom. III. &c.



**Part I. Works.** This Conclusion must needs be false, since the Gospel enjoins good Works as a necessary Condition in order to Salvation. St. Paul tells us, that *\* without Holiness no Man shall see God*: And does not that import, that none shall be sav'd without Holiness and good Works? The same Apostle teaches us, that at the Day of Judgment, when Men shall be admitted into, or excluded from Heaven, God will have a regard to their Works, to the good or evil which they shall have done: † *God will render to every Man according to his Works.* || *We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that we may receive according to what we have done, whether good or bad.* This is very positive; and therefore since there can be no Contradiction in Scripture, here is enough already to convince us, that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith has nothing in it which destroys the Necessity of good Works.

But it will appear yet less difficult to reconcile these two Doctrines, if we suppose that which no Man can reasonably contest; namely, that when the Scripture says, that *Faith* is sufficient to Salvation, we are to understand by the word *Faith* in this Proposition, *that true Faith* which the Gospel requires. Now if we ask, what that Faith is, and by what Marks may it be known?

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\* Heb. XII. 14. † Rom. II. 6. || 2 Cor. V. 10.

### Corruption of Christians.

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All the Apostles will unanimously tell us, Cause that true Faith produces a holy Life, and IV. that it discovers it self by all manner of good Works. They assign good Works as the essential Mark and Character that distinguishes a saving from an hypocritical Faith. By that very thing therefore that the Gospel requires Faith, it does likewise require good Works, since Faith cannot be without Works. And by consequence the Opinion of those, who fancy that Faith is sufficient without Works, is evidently absurd, and contrary to the Gospel, and to the nature of Faith it self.

But to set this matter still in a clearer Light, it is necessary to take notice here of two Mistakes which Men are apt to run into when they speak of Faith and good Works. The first is, that they separate Faith from Works; they look upon Faith as a thing quite different from Works, and which supplies the want of them; or rather they oppose Faith to Works, as if these two things were contrary to each other. A corrupt Man will say, *I confess that I have not good Works, but however I have Faith.*

Those who speak thus suppose that they may have Faith, tho they have not Works; but St. James has directly confuted this Imagination: \* *What does it profit, my Brethren,*

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\* James II. 14, 17.

tho

Part I. *tho a Man say he has Faith, and have not Works?*  
 Can Faith save him? If Faith hath not Works,  
 it is dead, being alone.

Who can after this separate saving Faith from good Works? Can we separate that from Faith which God has declar'd to be inseparable from it? It shews that Men are strangely blinded with Ignorance and Prejudice, when at this time of day we are fain to prove things so plain and unquestionable.

The second Illusion is, that Men place Faith in Confidence alone, and many define it by that. They fancy that to have Faith, is nothing else but to believe that God is merciful, and to rely upon the Merits of Christ; because Faith embraces the Promises of the Gospel, the natural Effect of which Promise is to fill the Heart with Assurance and Tranquillity. It is beyond all doubt, that for the most part true Faith is attended with Confidence; but Confidence is not the whole of Faith, and I cannot imagine what part of God's Word countenances that Notion, which places the Essence of Faith in Confidence alone. The Faith which the Gospel speaks of, consists in believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World; in embracing his Doctrine as true, and in making Profession of it; in doing his Commandments, and hoping for Salvation from him: But the resolving all Faith and Religion into Acts of Confidence,

Confidence, is the most extravagant Conceit **Cause**  
that can enter into a man's Head. If this **IV.**

Notion was true, it would follow from it, that in order to be sav'd, it is enough for a Man to believe that he shall be sav'd :

Which is the same thing as to say, that whoever would have a right to confide in God, needs do no more in order to that than actually to trust in him ; and that is a most ridiculous Thought, which turns all Religion into a strong Fancy. Before we believe a thing, we ought to know why we should believe it, and have good Reason and solid Grounds for our Belief. Before we trust in God, we ought to satisfy our selves that we have a Right to confide in him ; for can a Man be sav'd only, because without any Ground or Reason he fancies that he shall ?

We ought not to rely upon God but according to his Promise. Now God has promis'd nothing to those who live and are harden'd in Sin ; far from promising any thing to them, he threatens them with inevitable Ruin. What Claim or Title then can an obdurate Sinner have to the Mercy of God ? What Confidence can he repose in God's Promises, as long as he continues impenitent ? None at all, except we suppose in God a general Decree, to save indifferently all sorts of Persons.

It must not be said that these Considerations are apt to alarm and disturb the Peace of mens Consciences ; for they will alarm  
none



**Part I.** none of those who are animated with true Faith and sincere Piety. And as to others, we do them a great piece of service, when we awaken and terrify them out of that false Quiet into which a groundless Confidence has betray'd them. On the other hand, it is a dangerous thing to teach, that Confidence is the most essential thing to Faith; for by this we may alarm some good Men, who either thro melancholy, or want of Instruction, are destitute of Confidence and inward Peace. And it has certainly happen'd, that several pious Persons are fallen into black Thoughts and sad Scruples concerning their Salvation, and that they have in some measure desponded, because they did not find Confidence, and a Sense of the Love of God in themselves.

From all these Reflections it does evidently appear, that Faith never ought, nor can be separated from good Works; and that Christians are as much oblig'd to apply themselves to good Works, as they are to believe, and to have Faith.

But now if it be ask'd, why St Paul then opposes Faith to Works, and why he excludes Works when he treats of Justification? I answer, that the Apostle aims at two Things by this. His Design is to shew, 1. That Works are not the Cause and Foundation of Mens Salvation, but that it flows from the pure Mercy of God thro Jesus Christ. This he proves with respect both

to the Heathens and the Jews, in the first Cause Chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*. But IV. he did not mean to say, that good Works are not necessary under the Covenant of Grace. His Expressions are too clear to leave the least room for any doubt about this matter: To reject the Meritoriousness of good Works is one thing, and to deny their Necessity is another. But, 2. because it may be objected, that *St. Paul* does entirely exclude Works, and that he uses Expressions which imply, that Christians are no longer oblig'd to the Practice of them, and that they have no Influence on mens Salvation either as Causes or Conditions; but, on the contrary, are oppos'd to Faith: Therefore I add, that he speaks thus with relation to the Works of the Ceremonial Law, and especially to Circumcision. There were many in *St. Paul's* time who asserted, that Christians were bound to observe those legal Ordinances. It was about this Question that the Apostles met at *Jerusalem*, and determin'd, \* *That Christians are justify'd by Faith only, and that the Yoke of Mosai- cal Ordinances ought not to be laid upon them.* The same Controversy is handled by *St. Paul* in his Epistle to the *Galatians*, where giving an Account of his Dispute with *St. Peter*, and of his reprov'g him for his

\* Acts XV.

Part I. too great compliance with the *Jews*, he affirms, *That we are justify'd by the Faith of Christ, and not by the Works of the Law.*

Why has not that difference been observ'd which St. Paul makes about Works? When he speaks of the Works of the Mosaical Law, he calls them *the Works of the Law*, or barely *Works*; but when he treats of the Works which the Gospel prescribes, he calls them *good Works*, because they are really good, holy and profitable in their own nature: but this Title of *good Works* is never bestow'd upon the Works of the Ceremonial Law, which consider'd in themselves had nothing of Goodness or Holiness in them. In a word, *good Works*, in St. Paul's stile, are quite another thing than barely *Works*, or the *Works of the Law*.

If this had been consider'd, such great Pains need not to have been taken, to make \* St. Paul agree with St. James: † St. Paul says, *That Man is justify'd by Faith without the Works of the Law*; and ‖ St. James, *That Man is justify'd by Works, and not by Faith only*. There is no contradiction between these two Apostles; both follow one Hypothesis, and argue upon the same Principles. St. Paul disputing against the *Jews*, who would tie Christians to the observance of the Works of the Mosaical Law, affirms, *That Faith in*

\* Rom. III. 28. † Gal. II. 16. ‖ James II. 24.

Christ is sufficient, provided it brings forth good Works; and that it is not necessary to observe the Mosaical Rites. St. James disputing against Hereticks, who pretended that Faith did save without good Works, and so did intirely ruin our Saviour's Morals; declares, that Faith which do's not produce good Works, is not sufficient to Salvation. Is not this the same Doctrine with St. Paul's? But instead of reconciling these two Apostles, some People find here great difficulties. They do not reconcile St. James with St. Paul, but they rather refuse St. James by St. Paul. St. James is expounded with great Caution; as if he had gone too far by saying, *That Man is justified by Works, and not by Faith only.* This Proposition is softened as much as possible, it is excus'd rather than explain'd: but as for what St. Paul says, *That Faith alone justifies without Works,* it is taken in the utmost strictness; so that all is ascrib'd to Faith, and nothing to good Works. Nay, Faith is set in opposition to good Works, and God to God himself; the Passages of Scripture which speak of Faith being brought out against those which relate to Works. *It is true,* say some, *the Scripture says, that without Holiness no Man shall see God;* but it is likewise written, *That we are not justified by our Works, but only by Faith.* And by this way of Reasoning, Men raise themselves above the reproaches and accusations of their own Consciences.

Cause  
IV.



Part I. I say it once more; this is to attack and confute the Word of God by it self, and to charge the Holy Ghost with self-contradiction. For in short, if a Man can be justify'd without good Works, he can be sav'd without them too; since the being justify'd is the same thing with the being sav'd. Now if a Man can be sav'd without good Works, he may see the Face of God without Holiness; which is directly contrary to what St. Paul tells us, *\* That without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.*

2. A great many People imagin, that it is one of the Privileges of Christians, not to be tied to the Observation of God's Law as the Jews were: some mistaken places give occasion to that Error, and particularly this; *† We are no more under the Law but under Grace.* These words are thus interpreted: *The Law did prescribe Works, but the Gospel requires only Faith; the Law did threaten, but the Gospel speaks only of Grace and Pardon.* So that to require Works at this time of day, is to bring back the Dispensation of the Law. There is something of Truth in this Reasoning; but those who make use of it to free themselves from the Observation of God's Commandments, do very little understand either what the Law or the Gospel is, and wherein these two Dispensations differ. It is certain that the Law was a Dispensation

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\* Heb. XII. 14. † Rom. VI. 14.

of Severity; it did not propose to Men remission of Sins and Salvation, as the Gospel does. The Law had not that Power and Efficacy to sanctify Men, which Grace has. The Law laid upon the *Jews* a great many Obligations, which were not only burdensome and painful, but which besides had no intrinsecal Holiness in them; and those Duties were enjoined under a Curse. The Law it self was a time of Severity and Malediction, in respect to all the Nations of the Earth, since all the while that Oeconomy did subsist, they were excluded from the Covenant which God had made with the *Jews*. In these several regards, we are not under the Law, but under Grace.

But if from this, that we are not under the Law, we should infer, that we are no longer bound to do what is just; this Inference would overturn the whole Gospel, and transform Religion into Libertinism. If because we are under Grace we ought to speak no more of Works; why should the Gospel prescribe Works, and the same Works which the Law enjoined, excepting only the Ceremonies? Why should this Gospel call us to a Holiness, which exceeds that of the *Jews*, and enforce this Obligation with more terrible Threatnings than those of the Law? Why did our Saviour, *John* the Baptist and the Apostles preach up Repentance, and enter upon their Ministry

Part I. try with these Words, \* *Repent ye?* According to the Hypothesis of these Men, they should have spoken to them after this manner, *This is the time of Grace, the Law is past, and the Covenant of Works is abolished; therefore fear nothing, let not your Sins trouble you, for Salvation is promised to all Mankind.* Whence comes it to pass that our || Saviour speaks only of Works, in his Sermon upon the Mount; or that St. Paul declares, that the natural intention and the proper effect of Grace, is to teach Men to live according to the Rules of Temperance, Justice, and Godliness? Must we say, that God is alter'd, that he do's not love Holiness so much now, as he did heretofore; or that Sin is become less odious to him, since it was expiated by the Death of his Son? But (it is said) we are no more under the Law. What, are Christians then a lawless People? On the contrary we are under the Law, I mean under the Law of Christ, under \*\* *the Law of the Spirit of Life, which makes us free from the Law of Sin and Death.*

But let us hear St. Paul himself; in what sense and respect does he say, *That we are no more under the Law but under Grace?* He says this precisely to shew, that we ought to live no longer in Sin. These are his own Words, † *What then? Shall we sin, because we*

\* Mat. III. 2. & IV. 17. || Mat. V. 6, 7.

† Rom. VIII. 2. † Rom. VI. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

are not under the Law, but under Grace? God Cause forbid. On the contrary, Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under Grace; you were formerly the servants of Sin, but now being made free from Sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness. We need but read the sequel of his Discourse, to see how he inveighs against those who turned the Grace of the Gospel into a pretence to live in Sin. IV.

Before I leave this matter, I shall take notice of two Errors, which are pretty common. The first is, the applying to Christians at this Day, all those things which were spoken of old by the Apostles, to the converted Jews. It is said, *That we are no more under the Law*; and Christians are often exhorted to bless God for being no longer under the Curse of the Law, and the Yoke of Moses. And upon this a great many Oppositions are observ'd betwixt the Law and the Gospel. For my part, I do not think those Exhortations and Oppositions so very proper to be insisted on, when we are speaking to Men who never were Jews; unless we do it with a design to shew the excellency of the Gospel-Covenant above that of the Law, and the advantages of Christians above Jews. For after all, the Law was given only to the Jews, and the Gentiles were never subjected to the Ceremonies or the Curse of it, as the Jews were. Why should we then say to People who never were

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under



Part I. under the Law, *You are no more under the Law?* The Apostles indeed spoke in that manner to the converted Jews; but as to those who were formerly Pagans, it would be more fitting to tell them, \* *You have been converted from Idols to the living God: Remember that ye were in times past Gentiles, without Hope, and without God in the World; and therefore live no longer like Heathens.* It is a great Fault not to expound the Scripture according to the true Scope of it, and to apply all that it contains, to all sorts of Persons without distinction.

The other Error is of greater Consequence: People fancy that because we are not under the Law, which was a Covenant of Rigor, we are now to speak of nothing else to Men, but of Grace and Promises, and that it is contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel, to threaten and to denounce Curses against Sinners. It has been said already in what sense the Law was a Covenant of Rigor, in opposition to the Covenant of Grace; but the Gospel has also its Curses, and they are much more terrible than those of the Law. The Gospel speaks of the future Punishments of another Life, in much clearer and stronger Expressions than the Law does. To be convinc'd of this, we need but reflect upon that opposition which St. Paul makes between the Law and the

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\* 1 Thes. I. 9. Ephes. II. 12. & IV. 17.

Gospel, in the tenth Chapter to the *Hebrews*: Cause  
*He that despised Moses's Law died without* IV.

mercy, under two or three Witnesses; of how much s<sup>r</sup>er punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? We know him that has said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God.

3. The Libertines do likewise abuse what St. Paul says in his Epistle to the \* *Galatians* concerning Christian Liberty; when he declares that Christians are freed from the bondage of the Law; when he exhorts them, to stand fast in that Liberty, and protelts, that Christ profiteth nothing to those who would be justified by the Law. But a Man may see with half an Eye, that the Apostle meant only that Christians are no longer bound to observe Circumcision, and the other Ceremonies of the Law of *Moses*. That St. Paul has no other view or design but this, will plainly appear to every one who will read the whole Epistle, and particularly the second Chapter of it.

In the fifth Chapter we find two things which are decisive in this matter. 1. St. Paul speaks there expressly of Circumcision:

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\* Gal. V. 1.

Part I. \* Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every Man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law. Christ is become of none effect unto you: whosoever of you are justified by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace. 2. It is very observable with what circumspection the Apostle delivers himself, lest his Doctrine should be wrested to favour Licentiousness. After he had said, † You are called to liberty, he adds immediately, only use not liberty for an occasion to the Flesh. He explains what he means by living after the Flesh, by making an enumeration of those Sins which the Flesh produces, and which exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven. He exhorts Men to live after the Spirit, and to practise the Christian Virtues. In the fourth Chapter he pursues the same Exhortations, and he ends the Epistle with these remarkable Words, which contain the sum of his Doctrine: || For in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature; that is to say, whether a Man be a Jew or a Heathen it matters not, so he believes in Jesus Christ, and observes God's Commandments; \*\* Peace and Mercy be on them all who walk after this Rule. Is there any thing plainer than this Doctrine? and yet how clear soever it may be, Christian Liberty

\* Gal. V. 2, 3, 4. † Ver. 13. || Chap. VI. 15. \*\* Ver. 16.

is alledg'd to set Men free from the Ob-  
ligation to keep God's Commandments. IV.

All that St. Paul says against Circumcision and the Ceremonies of the Law, is, by an enormous Blasphemy, turned against the Holy Commandments of the Son of God. Can any thing more odious or profane be imagin'd, than the perverting of the Holy Scripture at this rate?

4. Those who plead on the side of Corruption, are wont to object against what is said in behalf of Holiness, this Sentence of Solomon's; \* *Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thy self over-wise.* And what Inferences do they not draw from thence? They conclude from this place, That a Man ought not to pretend so much to Holiness, or to set up for a good Man, and that in all things a Mediocrity is best. One may easily apprehend that such Sentiments must needs introduce Licentiousness; especially when they are thought to be supported by a divine Authority.

But let us see whether or no such Conceits can be founded upon this Sentence of Solomon's. I shall ask in the first place, Whether it is possible for a Man to be too Just or too Wise, and whether there can be a vicious excess in Righteousness or Wisdom? If a Man may be over-righteous, he may likewise love God too much; for to be

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\* Eccles. VII. 16.



Part I. righteous, and to love God, is the same thing. Now God requires that we should love him with all our Heart, and consequently that we should be as righteous, as it is possible for us to be. But far from being over-righteous, we can never be righteous enough; and if we can never be righteous enough, is there any occasion to exhort us that we should not be over-righteous? I wish Men had at least that reverence for the Scripture, as not to make it speak Absurdities.

I know the ordinary Evasion: Vicious Men will say, that when Piety runs to excess, it leads to Superstition or Pride, and becomes troublesom and ridiculous. Every body says that, but without Reason. I have refuted that Opinion, and shew'd that true Piety never degenerates into Superstition, or Pride; and that devout Men who are superstitious or troublesom, have but a false Devotion, or a misguided Zeal.

This may direct us to the true meaning of the Sentence in question; *Solomon* does not speak here of true Justice and Wisdom. For whether he may have an eye here to Superstitious or Hypocritical Persons, whose Righteousness is but imaginary, which Sense is adopted by many Interpreters; or whether he speaks of those who exercise Justice with too much severity, as some think; or whether, as it is conceived by others, he gives this advice to busy and presumptuous People, who meddle in things which

which do not concern them, and fancy Cause themselves able to determine all matters; IV. however, it is plain, that *Solomon* does not speak here of good Men, who exactly follow the Rules of true Justice and Wisdom. If we stick to the last of these three Expositions, which seems to agree best with *Solomon's* Design; then the meaning of this place is clear and rational, and has nothing in it contrary to Piety: whereas the sense put upon these Words by the Libertines, is both absurd and impious.

Those who would either justify or excuse Corruption, use to object in the second place, That since the Scripture teaches that all Men, and even good Men, are deeply engag'd in Corruption; it must follow from thence, that Holiness and good Works are not so very necessary, and that the practice of these is impossible. Now to prove this universal Corruption of all Men, they bring several Declarations of Scripture, and this among the rest, *There is not one that doeth good, no not one, &c. Psal. XIV. Rom. III.*

If their meaning in citing these Words, was only to shew, that there is no Man altogether free from Sin; and if it was granted on the other hand, that good Men do not sin in the same manner that the wicked do; I would not quarrel much about this Interpretation, tho not altogether exact or agreeable to the scope of *David* in

**Part I.** in the 19th Psalm. But there is another design in it, which is to infer from these Words, that Men differ very little from one another, that they are all guilty of many great Sins, and that none do or can practise the Duties of Holiness. In a word, this is intended for the Apology of Corruption, and to silence those who oppose it.

If what *David* says in this place is to be strictly understood, it will follow, that there is not one good Man upon Earth; that all Men are perverted, that they are all become abominable by their Sins, and that there is not one single Person that is just, or that fears God. But this Consequence raises Horror, it is contrary to Truth and Experience, and to what the Scripture declares in a thousand places, where it speaks of good Men, and distinguishes them from the wicked. Nay, this Consequence may be destroy'd from what we read in that very Psalm, which mentions the Just who are protected by God, and the Wicked who persecute them. This complaint of *David* must therefore be understood with some Restrictions.

By reading the XIV Psalm, we may perceive that *David* intends to describe in it, the extreme Corruption of Men in his time. There he draws the Picture of Impiety and Atheism, and speaks of *those Fools, who say in their hearts that there is no God*, and whose  
Life

Life is a continued chain of Sins. It must Cause  
be observ'd in the next place, that when St. IV.

Paul cites these Words out of the XIV Psalm in the Epistle to the Romans, Chap. III. he does it with a design to shew, that the Jews were not much better than the Heathens, and that they had as much need of a Saviour. \* *What then, are we better than they? No in no wise, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under Sin.* This is the Assertion which St. Paul maintains, and which he proves from that complaint which David made of old, † *There is not one that does good, &c.* From whence he concludes, *that all Mouths must be stopped, and that all the World is become guilty before God; so that the Law of Moses could neither justify nor sanctify the Jews.* But he teaches at the same time, that Christ was come to rescue Men out of that miserable Condition. And it were a strange thing if we must still say of Christians, *That there is none that does good, no not one.*

2. This Answer is to be applied to that place in the Ephesians, where it is said, || *That we are dead in Trespasses and Sins;* for to the same end these Words are quoted. I do not deny but all Men, abstracting from the divine Grace, are to be consider'd as dead in their Sins. That is St. Paul's meaning in that place; he speaks here of the natural

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\* Rom. III. 9. † Ver. 10. || Ephes. II. 1.



**Part I. State of Men, and particularly of Heathens;** which was a State of Corruption and Death, in which they had perish'd had not God taken pity upon them. But the Apostle intends to make the *Ephesians* sensible of that unparallel'd Mercy of God by which they were converted to Christianity, being but poor Heathens before, who were dead in their Sins, and obnoxious to the wrath of God. He does not say to them, *you are dead in your Sins*; it is a falsifying the Text to cite it so, and to say, *we are dead in our Sins*: but *you were dead*, he speaks of the times past when they were Heathens; \* *Among whom*, says he, speaking of the *Jews*, *we had our Conversation in times past, in the Lust of our Flesh, fulfilling the desires of the Flesh and of the Mind*: but now, he adds, *God has quickened us together with Christ; both you that were Heathens, and we that were Jews, are raised again from this spiritual Death by virtue of God's great Mercy*. This is the true meaning of that place, which gives us a lively Idea of Mens natural Corruption, and of that happy State to which Christ has exalted them. I do not deny but that many Christians are still in the same condition with Heathens, or very near it, being dead in their Sins, and following the course of this World; but this can be said only of bad Christians, and not

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\* Ephes. II. 3. & 5, &c.

of those who have felt the divine and sanctifying Virtue of the Christian Religion. Cause IV.

3. It will be further said, That we must needs acknowledg, that all Men without exception are Sinners, because that is St. John's Doctrine, \* *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves.* That is a Truth which no man denies, because it is too evident both from Scripture and Experience. But we must take care to understand this Proposition aright, *that all Men are Sinners*, and that we explain it so, as that it may comport with that just difference we are to make between good and bad Men; else under a pretence that all Men are Sinners, the distinction between Virtue and Vice will be taken away. It will be fit to remark upon this occasion, that the Scripture do's not give the name of *Sinners* to all Men, but only to the wicked and impious, as may be seen in the whole Book of *Psalms*. When we say then, that we are all poor Sinners, we must know in what sense we say it.

As to these words, *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves*; it is visible that St. John says this upon two accounts, which relate to two sorts of Sins, into which Men may fall. First, there are great Sins, there is that Corruption in which Men liv'd before their Conversion. In this re-

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\* 1 John I. 8.

Part I. *St. John* might say to those he writes to, who were new converted Christians, that they were all Sinners, meaning, that they had all been so; for indeed both *Gentiles* and *Jews* had been extremely corrupt. Secondly, There are Sins into which those whose Regeneration is not yet perfect, may fall; as there are Infirmities from which the most regenerate Men are not free. In this sense all Men are Sinners, and the Christians to whom *St. John* directs his Epistle were all Sinners also, tho already converted. But the question is, Whether a true Christian sins like other Men; and whether he who is a *Sinner*, taking that word according to the ordinary use of Scripture, that is to say, one in whom Sin reigns, is a true Christian? That can never be said. To this purpose we may hear *St. John* himself in the III Chapter of the same Epistle; where he expressly tells us, *That he who is born of God does not commit Sin, that whoever sinneth is of the Devil, and that by this we may know the Children of God and the Children of the Devil.* Are not these words very plain? Who can have the Confidence after this, to excuse Corruption by saying, *we are all Sinners?* But yet it is not only said that we are all Sinners by these Men, but besides, that we are all great, wretched and abominable Sinners. It is no wonder that Men who have such sentiments should be so corrupt.

4. But

4. But to this, there is a reply at hand, Cause  
to shew that the justest Men are guilty of IV.  
very frequent Sins; and it is taken from  
these words, *The just Man sins seven times a day.* I might let this alone, because I am  
engag'd only to answer those places of Scrip-  
ture which are wrested to an ill sense a-  
bout this matter. And this, that *the just*  
*Man sins seven times a day*, is no where to  
be found in the Bible. Those who quote  
these words as if they were the Scripture,  
will pretend no doubt that they are con-  
tain'd in *Prov. xxiv. 16.* but there is nothing  
like this in the Sacred Text. These are the  
words of Solomon, *A just Man falleth seven*  
*times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall*  
*fall into mischief.* Solomon speaks of the fre-  
quent Afflictions of good Men, and parti-  
cularly of the ill usage they meet with from  
wicked Men. In the 15th Verse he address-  
es himself to the wicked, and tells them,  
that it is in vain for them to lay wait for and  
to persecute the Just; for, adds he, *a just*  
*Man falleth seven times, and riseth up again,*  
*but the wicked shall fall into mischief and perish.*  
The meaning is, that God takes care of the  
Just, and that if he permits they should  
fall into many Calamities, he does likewise  
deliver them. This is asserted almost in the  
same words, *Psal. XXXVII. 24. Tho the just*  
*fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the*  
*Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* To the  
same purpose we are told, *Job V. 19. He shall*  
K deliver



Part I. *deliver thee in six Troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee.* This admits of no difficulty, and all Interpreters are agreed about it. And yet for all that, as Men are apt to entertain every thing which excuses Corruption, this Proverb, *That the just Man sins seven times a day*, prevails and passes for an Article of Faith. Is it not a lamentable thing, that Men should be thus obstinately bent to wrest the Scripture to a Sense favourable to Corruption, and that they should dare to falsify it at this rate?

There are many falsifyings in the way of citing this Passage. 1. Whereas *Solomon* says only *the just*, he is made to say *the justest Man*, to give the greater force and extent to this Sentence, to debase Piety the more, and to insinuate that the best and holiest Men are great Sinners. 2. *Solomon* is made to say, that *the just sins*, but he does not say that; he says only that *the just falls*. I know that to *fall*, signifies sometimes to *sin*; but *falling* denotes likewise very frequently to be *afflicted*, and a Man is blind who does not see, that in this Text, the word *fall* is used in this second sense. The 17th Verse, which comes immediately after that we are now examining, proves it beyond exception, *Rejoice not when thy Enemy falleth*, &c. Besides, those who are acquainted with the Sacred Stile, know that it does not usually express the Sins of Infirmary, to which the Just are subject, by the word *fall*.

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that word importing commonly the Fall of Cause wicked Men. 3. Solomon is made to say, IV.

*That the justest Man sins seven times a day.* ~~~~~

This is another falsifying, an addition to the Text, which is of no small consequence.

*Seven times a day*, is not in the Text ; there is only *seven times*. Every body knows that

*seven times* signifies many times. And so

the meaning would be, that the Just does no-

thing else but transgress ; that many times

a day he falls into sin. But who does not

see that this would be the Description of a

Man in whom Sin reigns, and who is habi-

tually engag'd in it, and not the Character

of a good Man? I do not say, but that

Just Men have their weak sides, and fall

sometimes into Sin ; this happens more or

less according to the degree of their Rege-

neration : but it is impious to say, that

their Life is spent in continual Sins, and

that they offend God at every foot ; and yet

this is what Men would establish from this

Maxim, *That the justest Man sins seven times*

*a day*. Those who have a mind to quote

the Scripture, should neither add to, nor

diminish from it ; they should not alter the

Words, nor divide Sentences from what

goes before and what follows : for other-

wise there is no Absurdity nor Impiety,

which may not be prov'd from the Word

of God.

5. But our Adversaries will say, Whether

that place is alledg'd right or wrong, it does

Part I. not matter much, since there are others which say the same thing, in stronger Expressions. Does not St. Paul say, \* *I am carnal, sold under Sin, for in me dwelleth no good thing: for that which I do, I allow not; and what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. I see a Law in my Members, warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members. O wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this Death? If St. Paul himself speaks after this manner, who can deny that the greatest Saints fall into very heinous Sins, and have still a large stock of Corruption in them?*

Those who draw this Inference from the Words of St. Paul, make him speak that which is quite contrary to his thoughts. He is so far from saying any thing that favours the cause of Sinners, that on the contrary his design is to prove the necessity of a good Life, and to make Men sensible of the Efficacy of the Gospel in reference to Sanctification. He had this in his view, in the seventh Chapter to the *Romans*, where he represents the difference between a corrupt and a regenerated Man, and between the Condition of Man under the Law, and his State under the Gospel. So that all he says of the Carnal Man sold under Sin, &c. is

\* Rom. VII. 14, 15, &c.

to be understood of a corrupt Man, living under the Law. Cause IV.

I am not ignorant that Divines, otherwise able and pious Men, have thought that *St. Paul* speaks of himself in this Chapter, and that he represents there, what passes within a Regenerate Man; but I know likewise that a great many Orthodox Divines have rejected that Exposition, as contrary to the scope of the Apostle, to the constant Doctrine of the New Testament, and to the Spirit of the Christian Religion. It is a sad thing that when a place is capable of two Senses, Men should pitch upon that, which comes nearest to the Pretensions of Sinners. I do not intend here to enter into a Dispute, nor to offend those of a contrary Opinion; I am persuaded they have no design to countenance Corruption: but as in all things we ought to seek the Truth, and as the Truth here is of great consequence for the promoting of Piety, so I intreat those who might have Scruples concerning those Words, to make these following Reflections.

1. Let them seriously and impartially consider, Whether it may be said that *St. Paul* was a carnal Man sold under Sin, a Man who did no Good but Evil, and a Man involv'd in Death; these are the strongest Expressions which can be used, and which the Scripture uses to give as the Character of wicked and impious Men. To believe this



Part I. this of *St. Paul*, is so very hard, that a Man must be able to digest any thing, who is not startled at it.

2. I desire them to attend to the Drift of *St. Paul*: He had undertaken to shew, that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith did not introduce Licentiousness; this he had prov'd in the whole sixth Chapter, as may appear by the reading it. Is it likely that in the seventh Chapter he should overturn all that he had establish'd in the preceding, and say that the holiest Men are captivated to the Law of Sin? If this be *St. Paul's* Doctrine, what becomes of the Efficacy of Faith to produce Holiness; and how could he have answer'd that Objection which he proposes to himself, Chap. VI. 1, and 15. *Shall we continue in Sin? shall we sin, we that are under Grace?* *St. Paul* ought to have granted the Objection, if it be true, that the most Regenerate are sold to Sin. But it is plain, that in the seventh Chapter he goes on to prove what he had laid down already, to wit, that the Gospel sanctifies Men; and not only this, but that the Gospel alone can sanctify Men, and that the Law could not. This is the Scope of the whole Chapter.

In the very first four Verses he shews that *Christians are no longer under the Law*, nor consequently under Sin; and that they are dead to the Law, that they may bring forth fruits unto God. He expresses himself more clearly yet in the fifth Verse, where he says, that

that there is a considerable difference between those who are under the Law, and those who are in Jesus Christ. He plainly distinguishes these two States, and the time past from the present. *When we were in the flesh*, says he, *the Motions of Sin which were by the Law, did work in our Members to bring forth fruits unto death; but now we are deliver'd from the Law, that we should serve in Newness of Spirit.* These are the two States: The State past was a State of Corruption, the present State is a State of Holiness. But as it might have been infer'd from thence, that the Law was the cause of Sin, the Apostle refutes that Imagination, from the 7th to the 14th Verse.

After this, he describes the miserable Condition of a Man who is not regenerated by Grace, and who still is under the Law. He begins to do this from the 14th Verse, by saying, *The Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under Sin*, &c. And here no doubt it will be said, that St. Paul speaks of himself, and not of those who are under the Law; for says he, *I am carnal*, &c. But one may easily see that the Apostle uses here a way of speaking which is very ordinary in Discourse, and by which he that speaks puts himself in the room of those he speaks of. And St. Paul had the more reason to express himself after this manner, because he had been himself under the Law, before he was converted to Christianity. There are many Instances in Scripture of this way of speaking; and we

**Part I.** find one in this very Chapter which is beyond exception. St. Paul says in the ninth Verse, *I was alive without the Law once, &c.* If we do not admit here a figurative expression, or if these words are strictly taken; then we must say, that there was a time when this Apostle was without Law, which is both false and ridiculous. As therefore it is plain, that when he says, Ver. 9. *I was without Law*, he speaks of the State of those Men to whom the Law was not given; so it is unquestionable, that when he says, *I am carnal*, &c. he describes the State of a corrupt Man living under the Law, and not his own. This is the Key which lets us into the meaning of his Discourse, in which the Law is mention'd almost in every Verse.

3. Lastly, That which makes it as clear as the Sun, that this is his true Sense, is, that when the Apostle considers and speaks of himself as a Christian, he uses quite another Language. To be satisfy'd of this, we need but run over this Chapter, and compare it with other places in his Epistles.

If he says here, Verse 7, 8. *That Concupiscence is felt and reigns within a Man who is under the Law*; he declares, Gal. V. 24. *That Christians have crucify'd the Flesh with the Lusts of it.* If he says, Verse 9, 10. *That Sin lives within him, and that he is dead*; he had said, Chap. VI. 2, 11. *That he was dead unto Sin, and living unto God thro Jesus Christ.* If he says, Verse 14. *That he is carnal and sold un-*

der

der Sin, it is apparent that he does not speak Cause of himself, since Chap. VIII. 1, and 8. he IV. tells us, *That those who are in Christ Jesus are not in the Flesh, and that those who are in the Flesh cannot please God, and have not his Spirit.* If he says here, Verse 19. *I know that in me dwelleth no good thing;* he declares, Eph. III. 17. *That Christ dwells in our hearts by Faith.* If he says, Verse 19. *The Good that I would, I do not; and the Evil which I hate, that I do;* he testifies in many places, *That the Faithful do that which is good, and abstain from evil.* If he complains, Verse 21, 22, 23. *of his being captivated to the Law of Sin;* he teaches, Chap. VI. 17, 22. *That Christians are no longer the Servants of Sin, that they are freed from it, and become the Servants of Righteousness.* If he cries out, Ver. 24. *O wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* it is manifest, that these are not the Expressions of a Man regenerated by Jesus Christ: for he adds immediately, *I thank God thro Jesus Christ our Lord. There is therefore now no Condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit. For the Law of the Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus, has made me free from the Law of Sin and Death,* Chap. VIII. 12.

Now let any body judg, whether what is said in this Chapter can be apply'd to St. Paul, consider'd as a regenerated Christian? Can it be said, that Concupiscence reigns in him



**Part I.** him who has crucify'd it? That Sin lives in him who is dead to Sin? That he who is not in the Flesh, is a carnal Man? That he who is freed from Sin, is sold to Sin? That no good thing dwells in those in whom Christ dwells? That a Man is at the same time miserable and happy, a Slave, and yet deliver'd by Jesus Christ, dead and alive? To say this, is it not to call Good Evil, and Evil Good; to put Darknes for Light, and Light for Darknes? Is it not to admit downright Contradictions in Scripture? But especially, is it not to open a door to Licentiousness, and to give us a strange Notion of a regenerate Man?

By all that has been said, I do not mean that there are no remnants of Corruption in those who are regenerated. Neither do I deny, but that in those whose Regeneration is just begun, there is some such struggle as that which is describ'd in this Chapter. This is *Musculus's* Notion, in his Commentary upon the \* *Romans*. But that this Chapter should be the Picture of a regenerate Man, and of a true Member of Christ, is a thing so contrary to the Gospel, and to all the Ideas of Religion, that one can hardly imagine how there could ever be Men who believ'd it.

**III.** But that which corrupt Christians endeavour to prove by those Passages I have mention'd, they think to put out of all question,

by the Examples of those Saints whose Sins Cause are recorded in Holy Writ. To this purpose they alledg *Noah, Lot, Abraham, Sampson, David, Solomon, St. Paul, St. Peter, &c.* and from these Instances they conclude, that since those great Saints fell into such heavy Sins, Sin is no Obstacle to Salvation, and that it is not inconsistent with Piety. IV.

If we did make a right use of the Word of God, we would draw a quite contrary Inference from these Instances; and consider that it is absurd to plead Precedents, against an exprefs Law. If we must needs be govern'd by Examples, we ought certainly to chuse the good, and not the bad ones; to imitate what is praise-worthy in the Saints, and not what deserves blame; their Faults being like so many Beacons, set up to keep us from striking upon the same Rocks.

But to answer directly; I say first, that we are a little too apt to rank among Saints some illustrious Persons mention'd in the Sacred History, who perhaps were nothing less than Holy Men, and who it may be did perish in their Sins, tho God thought fit to make use of them to carry on the Designs of his Providence, and to deliver his People. It would be a rash thing to pronounce upon any man's Salvation, or to speak irreverently of those great Men: but the Instance of *Solomon*, whose Salvation has been at all times question'd by Divines, should teach us

Part I. us not to be so hasty in placing those among Saints, of whom the Scripture speaks with some honour, and in sheltering our selves under their Examples.

As to those who by the Testimony of the Scripture it self did truly fear God, I might observe that they fell but once into those Sins related in the Sacred History; which would by no means favour impenitent and habitual Sinners. But this Answer does not fully satisfy; for besides that it supposes a thing which in respect of several Persons cannot certainly be known, there are some Sins which are so black, such as Adultery and Apostacy, that a Man can hardly commit them more than once, except he is altogether sold to Sin; and further, any one of those Sins is incompatible with a State of Regeneration.

We must therefore frankly own, that when those great Men sin'd in that manner, they did not act like Saints; that they put themselves into a State, which, consider'd in it self, was a State of Damnation; and that they had perish'd, if they had continu'd in it: for as *Ezekiel* says, Chap. XXXIII. 18. *When the Righteous turneth from his Righteousness, and commits Iniquity, he shall even die thereby.* We may judg of the Heinousness and Danger of those Sins, by the degree of Repentance which some of these Men have exprest'd for them, and by the publick acknowledgments they made of them.

them. What alarms was *David* in, when he compos'd the 51st Psalm, which is the Psalm of his Repentance? What a deep sense had *St. Peter* of his Fault, in denying his Master? What do then such Examples signify to those who live in Sin and Impenitency? Who can be sure that God will give him the Grace to recover himself, as those holy Men did? Those who presume to sin as they did, in hopes that they shall in like manner wipe off their Sins by Repentance and Amendment, reason just like a Man, who should swallow down Poison, and conclude it would not kill him, because some who have been poison'd, have escap'd Death.

But that which deserves here our greatest Consideration, is the Time which those Saints lived in. There is great difference between us Christians, and the good Men under the Old Testament. Men before Christ had not by a great deal that Light which we have, and did not know, as we do, the Duties of Holiness. Our Saviour teaches us that distinction, when he says, \**That John the Baptist was the greatest among those who were born of a Woman, but that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than John the Baptist*: That is to say, that Christians have a much greater Light than either *John Baptist*, or all the antient Prophets had. Now the measure of Know-

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\* Mat. XI. 11.



**Part I.** ledg, ought to be the measure of Piety; and therefore Christians ought to excel the *Jews* in Holiness. What God did bear with at that time, would be in us altogether intolerable; and how can it be lawful for us to imitate the Antients in their Vices, when we are bound to surpass their Vertues?

This Principle is of great moment, and without it we can hardly silence profane Persons. A Libertine insisting upon Precedents, will say that Polygamy, the keeping of Concubines, Murder, Divorce upon the slightest pretences, and such like Disorders, are not so criminal as they are imagin'd to be; he will produce the Instances of *Abraham* and *Jacob*, of the Judges of *Israel*, of *David* and the *Jews*. Far be it from us to detract from the Honour and Praise due to those antient Worthies; they have done much for the Time they liv'd in. But God forbid too, that we should lessen the Glory and the Advantages of the Christian Religion. If we speak like Christians, we will say, That God in his Goodness did pass over many things, by reason of the Time, and of the natural Temper of the *Jews*, who were a gross and carnal People. Our Saviour's Answer to the *Pharisees* concerning Divorce, is very much to our purpose: † *Moses suffer'd you to put away your Wives, but from the beginning it was not so.* And

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† Mat. XIX. 8.

then he adds, that whosoever should imitate the *Jews*, and do that which had been done and tolerated till then, should be guilty of Adultery. Cause IV.

We may easily apply this Answer to the Instance of *St. Peter*; since before our Saviour's Ascension, the Apostles were weak as yet, and possess'd with various Prejudices. But I think my self bound to add a word or two concerning the Example of *St. Paul*, because it is commonly mistaken. That Apostle says, \* *That he was a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, who was not worthy to be call'd an Apostle; and that he was the chief of Sinners.* At the first hearing of these words, many imagine that *St. Paul* had been a profligate Man, a Swearer, and a Godless Wretch: and yet he means nothing else, but that he had once persecuted the Church. For otherwise, *St. Paul* before his Conversion to Christianity was a good Man, and his Life was blameless and exemplary; for this he appeals to God, and the *Jews*, *Acts XXIII. 1. and XXVI. 4.* If he did persecute the Church then, it was thro a blind Zeal and Ignorance; and for that reason, as he tells us himself, *Ver. 13. He obtain'd Mercy from God.* Is not this quite another case, than that of those Christians, who knowingly and wilfully allow themselves in Sin?

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\* 1 Tim. I. 13, 15. 1 Cor. XV. 9.

Part I. It is another mistake to make St. Paul say, as some do, *That he is the greatest of Sinners*: He does not say that; he says only, *That he is the chief or the first of those Sinners whom Jesus Christ did save*. His meaning is, that he holds the first rank among converted Sinners, that he is a remarkable Instance of the Divine Mercy, and that Jesus had begun by him, to shew his Clemency and Goodness. Thus he explains himself, Ver. 16. *For this cause, says he, I obtain'd Mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all Long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him*. This is exactly what he meant; for as to what some imagine, that St. Paul out of Humility acknowledges himself the greatest of all Sinners, I think that Explication is wrong, and that it neither agrees with Truth, nor Piety, nor good Sense. A good Man is not bound to think himself worse than the greatest Sinners; on the contrary, he ought to bless God, for that Good which the Divine Grace has wrought in him.

IV. But as the last Refuge of Sinners is the Mercy of God, so they commonly abuse those places, which set forth the Greatness of that Mercy. They found this principally upon these words, *Where Sin does abound, Grace does much more abound*. Under the Cover of this short Sentence, the most flagitious Sinners think themselves safe. But the bare reading St. Paul's Discourse, will soon

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convince us, that this is to wrest the Scripture to a false and pernicious Sense. The Cause  
 Apostle's Design is to shew, that all Men IV.  
 being render'd Sinners in *Adam*, and by the Law; the Goodness of God was so great, that he was willing to save them thro Jesus Christ. In order to this, to establish this Truth, he had prov'd that before Christ, Sin and Death reign'd every where; not only among the Heathens, but also among the Jews: upon this he adds, *That where Sin did abound, Grace did much more abound*; to signify God's having mercy on them when they were involv'd in Sin and Death. In a word, St. Paul sets the happy Condition to which Men were advanc'd by Jesus Christ, in opposition to that which they were in before. This is the sense of that Place, and the drift of the whole Epistle. Can any one infer from thence, that now we may freely sin, and that Grace will exert it self towards us, whatever Sins we may commit?

It is fit to observe besides, that when St. Paul speaks of Grace, he does not only mean the pardoning, but likewise the sanctifying Grace, which destroys the pretension of the Libertines. The Apostle himself confutes it with a great deal of vehemence: He foresaw that some would argue like those we now contend with, and he makes this Objection to himself, \* *What then, shall we con-*

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\* Rom. VI. 1, 2, 3, 11, 12.



Part I. *tinue in Sin, that Grace may abound? And this is his Answer, God forbid! how shall we that are dead to Sin, live any longer therein? We who have been baptiz'd into Christ's Death, that we should walk in newness of Life. Rec- kon ye also your selves dead unto Sin, but a- live unto God, thro Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal Body, that you should obey it in the Lusts there- of. The Apostle pursues these Exhortations to the end of the Chapter.*

2. The Promises and Instances of God's Mercy are frequently also taken in a sense which favours Corruption and Security. All that the Gospel says upon this head is interpreted by vicious Men, as if the Son of God was come into the World to give Men a Licence to sin. To this purpose the Instances of that Woman who was a Sinner, of *Zacheus*, and the converted Thief, are often alledg'd; as likewise the Parable of the prodigal Son, of the Publican, and of the Labourers. And from these Instances, as well as from our Saviour's Declarations, \* *That he is not come to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*; it is concluded, that the greatest Sinners may obtain Salvation as well as the Just. But if those who quote these Instances did narrowly examine them, they would read in them their own Condemnation: For, first,

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\* Mark II. 17.

all these Sinners, mention'd in the Gospel, Cause  
did repent, and were converted. That IV.

Woman, who had been a notorious Sinner, expresses the most lively Sorrow; the Publican smites his Breast, the Prodigal comes to himself again, and detests his former Excesses; *Zacheus*, if he was an unjust Man, restores fourfold. From these Instances we may very well infer, that God never rejects returning Sinners; but even this is an invincible Argument, that there is no mercy for those who persist in their Sins, and that too in hopes of Pardon.

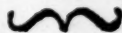
Besides, we must know that our Saviour's Design, in all these Parables and Instances, was to inform Men, that he was come to invite the greatest Sinners to Repentance; and especially to let the Jews understand, that for all the high Opinion they had of their own Dignity and Merit, the Heathens, who liv'd in the greatest Corruption, were to be admitted into God's Covenant, and to have a share in his Favour; which actually happen'd to all those Heathens who did believe in Jesus Christ. These Instances and Parables then represent the State Men were in at that time, and not the State of those who are enter'd already into the Christian Church. It can never be said too much, nor remembred too often in the reading of the Gospel; that there is a vast difference between those Heathens, who never heard a word of God or Jesus Christ;

**Part I. and Christians who are born in the Church,**  
 and live in the Covenant with God.

Thus I think I have examin'd those Places of Scripture, which are most commonly abus'd by the Libertines. If I have omitted any, I hope what has been said in this Chapter may serve to suggest pertinent and satisfactory Answers to them.

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C A U S E V.

*A False Modesty.*

**C**ORRUPTION is not wholly to be imputed to that Ignorance, or to those Prejudices and loose Opinions which prevail among Christians; for Men do not always sin thro want of Knowledg, or out of mere Wantonness and Libertinism. There are many who acknowledg the Viciousness of the Age, and the Necessity of a good Life; and yet they neglect their Duties intirely, or at least they are very remiss in the doing of it, acting for the most part against their own Persuasions.

There must be then other Causes of Corruption in Men, besides those which we have hitherto discover'd. It is necessary to search into these, and to find out, if possible, why many Persons, who want no Instruction, and are sollicitated by the Motions of their own Consciences to embrace the side of Vertue and Piety, do, notwithstanding, continue in Vice and Corruption.

This seems to proceed chiefly from two Dispositions which Men are commonly in.

On the one hand they are restrain'd, by an ill Shame, from acting sutably to the Sentiments of their own Consciences; and on



Part I. the other hand, they put off their Conversion, hoping they shall one day make up all the Irregularities of their Conduct by Repentance. I look upon these Dispositions as two of the principal Causes of Corruption, and therefore I thought it might be proper to consider them both distinctly. I design to treat of *False Modesty* in this Chapter, and to shew, 1. The Nature; and, 2. The Effects of it.

1. By *False Modesty*, I mean that Shame which hinders Men to do that which they know to be their Duty. I call this Shame vicious or ill, to distinguish it from another kind of Shame, which is good and commendable, which consists in being ashamed to do ill things. If *False Shame* is a Source of Corruption, that other Shame, which restrains from Evil, is a Principle of Vertue, and a Preservative against Sin; and therefore it ought to be as carefully cherish'd and maintain'd, as vicious Shame should be avoided or shaken off: For as soon as the sense of this commendable Shame is gone, Innocency is irrecoverably lost. It is a part of the Character of Sinners in Scripture, that their Wickedness raises no Blushing or Confusion in them.

I say then, that this false Shame keeps Men from doing at the same time what they know and approve to be their Duty; and it is under that notion particularly that I am to consider it here. It is not my Design

sign to speak of that Shame which arises from Ignorance or Contempt, and which is to be met with in those profane and worldly Men, who because they do not know Religion, or judge it unworthy of their Application, think it a Disgrace to follow its Maxims. I refer such men to the first Chapter of this Book, and to some further Considerations, which I am to insist upon elsewhere. The Shame I speak of at present, supposes some Knowledge in the Mind, and some Value for and Inclination to Piety. From whence it appears how dangerous the Effects of that Shame are, and how important it is to know and observe them; since it seduces and corrupts even those who are none of the worst Men, and of whom otherwise we might reasonably hope well.

Now to apprehend the nature of this vicious Shame, it must be observ'd, that Shame commonly springs from two Causes; sometimes it proceeds from the Nature of the thing we are ashamed of, or from the Opinion we have of it: Thus Men are ashamed of things, which either are, or appear dishonest in their Nature. But sometimes also Shame is an effect of the regard we bear to other mens Judgment, and then we are ashamed to do things which may bring Contempt upon us, and disgrace us in the World. One may soon perceive that the Shame that is vicious does not arise

**Part I.** from the first of these Causes. Religion has nothing in it that is shameful and dishonest; for far from that, it is of all things the most comely and honourable, and the most worthy of a Man; and it appears such even to those who, by reason of a groundless Shame, dare not practise the Rules of it. The true Cause then of this false Modesty, is a feeble regard to mens Judgment, and a fear of falling under their Contempt or Hatred; Piety is little practis'd in the World, it is despis'd, and it is hated: and these are the three principal Causes of vicious Shame.

1. Piety is little practis'd in the World, few People love or practise it. Now a Man is very inclinable to do that which is commonly done; he thinks it is safest and most honourable to side with the Multitude; he is afraid of making himself ridiculous by being singular. It is a Maxim generally receiv'd, that we ought to comply with Custom, and to do as others do. The Reason then why many have not the Courage to be on the side of Religion, is, because that Side is deserted and abandon'd.

2. Piety is often despis'd in the World, it is look'd upon as a mean and disgraceful thing. The strictness of a Man, who acts upon Principles of Religion and Conscience, is imputed to weakness of Mind, singularity of Humour or Caprice, and sometimes to Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy and Pride. Those who profess Cause Devotion and Piety, are turn'd into Ridi- V. cule; and on the contrary, it is thought honourable to comply in every thing with the Ways and Fashions of the Age. Tho these Sentiments are very unjust, yet they make a great Impression, because few People have Firmness enough to slight the Judgment and Contempt of Men. We have naturally a quick sense of Honour, and nothing is so unsupportable to Self-love as Contempt; so that this Temptation is dangerous, and it easily produces in a Man a false Shame, which diverts him from Religion.

3. Piety does likewise procure the Hatred of the World, because a good Life accuses, condemns and reproaches those who live ill. Besides, Religion obliges us sometimes to do things which displease and offend Men. How cautious soever it may be, it is much if, upon many Occasions, it does not stir up their Jealousy, their Hatred, or their Spleen. A good Man is often bound to refuse what is desir'd of him: He is unacquainted with the Maxims of that mean and fawning Complaisance, which is necessary to get every body's Love. Many for this reason neglect Piety; they dare not let shine a Light, which discovers the Weaknesses and Errors of others; and Fear and Shame together make them think, that it would be Ill-breeding, as well as a piece of

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of



**Part I. of Imprudence,** to follow a Course of Life, which might render them odious.

From these Considerations it appears already, that this Shame is one of the general Fountains of Corruption, and that it can produce none but very ill Effects; first upon those in whom it is, and next upon other Men.

1. The natural Effect of vicious Shame, is to dissuade a Man from his Duty, and to draw him into Sin. It makes his Knowledge useless, it frustrates the Warnings which his Conscience gives him, and so it extinguishes in him the Principles of Virtue. Those who are possess'd with this Shame dare neither speak nor act as they ought, they dissemble their true Sentiments, they offer Violence to their Consciences, they have not the Courage to speak the Truth, or to reprove their Neighbours when occasion requires, they are loth to confess or to amend their Faults; in a word, they frequently neglect the most indispensable Duties of Piety and Charity; and all this because they are check'd by a false Shame.

But if this Shame hinders us to do Good, it does as forcibly prompt us to Evil: As soon as a Man thinks it a Disgrace to do Good, and to distinguish himself by a Christian Deportment, he presently conceives likewise that it would be a Shame to him not to imitate the Irregularities of

others.

others. Hence it is that we applaud Sin, Cause  
that we are carry'd away by the Sollicita- V.  
tions or Examples of Persons of Authority, ~~~~~  
that we cannot withstand the Intreaties of  
Friends, that we engage in unjust Enter-  
prizes or criminal Diversions, and that we  
fall into many other wicked Practices: A  
very little Reflection upon our selves will  
easily convince us, that Shame produces all  
these ill Effects. A Heathen Author \* has  
prov'd long ago, in an excellent Tract, that  
false Modesty is one of the greatest Obsta-  
cles to Vertue, and that Men commit ma-  
ny Faults, and bring a great deal of Mis-  
chief upon themselves, only because they  
dare not refuse to comply with others.

2. The Effects of this Shame are not less  
fatal in respect of other Men. As it pro-  
ceeds from the regard we bear to their  
Judgments, so it usually shews it self in  
their Company ; so that we cannot but  
scandalize and corrupt them, when we go-  
vern our selves by the Suggestions of this  
false Shame. For not to mention here the  
Scandal which this gives to good Men,  
those very Persons, for whose sake we use  
such sinful Compliances, and who despise  
Religion, conceive yet a greater Con-  
tempt of it, when they see that those, who  
ought to support its Interest, are asham'd  
of it, and dare not openly profess it. They

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\* Plutarch.

**Part I.** judg that Piety must be indeed a very mean and contemptible thing; and when they observe that Men are afraid to displease them, they take such an Ascendant over them, that Vertue dares no more appear in their presence: Besides, that such an Indulgence towards Vice gives a new force to it. If vicious Men are not reprov'd, it confirms them in their ill Habits; if they are imitated, they are authoriz'd; if we are ashamed to confess our Faults before them, we do not heal the Scandal which we have given them, and that is the greater for having been occasion'd by Men who are thought pious, and not by Libertines. But that we may be the more sensible of the pernicious effects of this kind of Shame, we ought to take notice of three Things, which are very remarkable in this matter.

1. Shame is a thing which has an absolute power over a Man. Other Passions may more easily be resisted; but when Shame has gained an Ascendant over the Mind, it is extream hard to be conquer'd, especially if it proceeds from the regard we have for Men; for when it arises from a natural Disposition, it may sooner be overcome. The greatest Threats and Promises will not sometimes shake a Man, who will presently yield if Shame can be excited within him. How often do we find the most vigorous Efforts we can make upon our selves, and our best Resolutions, quite dash'd

dash'd by a silly Bashfulness? A Jest, a Cause  
bare Look, or a slight Apprehension of be-  
ing thought ridiculous, or a Bigot, is some-  
times enough to confound us, and to make  
all our good Purposes vanish.

2. It ought to be consider'd, that the  
Shame we speak of here restrains those Per-  
sons who in their Hearts are inclin'd to Ver-  
tue; those who live in a profound Igno-  
rance, or in a total Obduration, being not  
susceptible of this Shame. It supposes, as  
has been said, some remainder of Consci-  
ence and Knowledg solliciting Man to his  
Duty; but it overcomes that Knowledg  
and those good Sentiments. We are to im-  
pute to this vicious Shame a great part of  
the Sins of good Men: and this is one of the  
Articles upon which they have most reason  
to reproach themselves, as is well known  
to those who make any Reflection upon  
their Conduct. And if this Shame is able  
to spoil those who otherwise are vertuous,  
and to extinguish their Zeal and Piety, we  
ought to reckon it among the principal  
Causes of Corruption.

3. Shame may lead Men to the highest  
Degrees of Wickedness. For besides that a  
Man sins against his Conscience, when for  
fear of Men he dares not do his Duty; be-  
sides that he offends God in a very provok-  
ing manner, when he is asham'd to obey  
him, and fears Men more than him; I say,  
that this Shame is apt to betray him into the  
greatest



**Part I.** greatest Enormities. A Man is capable of every thing when he becomes a Slave to other Mens Judgment, and when Complaisance or Humane Consideration have a greater force upon him than the Laws of Religion and his Duty. Whenever a Man dares not appear good, he dares appear in some measure wicked. And when he ties to Vertue an Idea of Shame, he is not far from affixing an Idea of Honour to Vice, and from complying in every thing with the Opinions of loose and profane Persons.

1. Men do not arrive of a sudden at this degree of Corruption; false Shame carries them to it by little and little. It makes one sin at first through Complaisance, tho with some Reluctancy. By this Conscience grows weaker; a Man contracts the Habit of slighting its Suggestions, and Vice becomes more familiar to him; then he begins to sin more boldly, the shame of doing good increases, and the shame of sinning grows less. In a little time he comes to do out of Custom and Inclination, what he did before but seldom, and with some inward Conflict. From thence he proceeds to an open contempt of Piety, and so he forsakes an Interest to which he was well affected at first, but which this Shame has made him dislike. Thus many Persons, who had good dispositions in their Youth, being let loose into the World, have lost their Innocence, and are turn'd Libertines and Atheists.

Now

Now this false Modesty being so pernicious, we can never labour too much to prevent its ill Effects; and this we shall succeed in, if we seriously consider, that there is a great deal both of Error and Cowardice in the Sentiments and Conduct of those who are hinder'd by Shame, from discharging the Duties of Religion and Conscience. First, there is a great deal of Error in their Proceeding. This Shame is founded upon nothing else but the Judgment which the World makes of Piety: but if those who despise Religion are in the wrong, as they most certainly are, if it is Extravagance and Folly in them to pass a false Judgment upon Piety; it is a much greater Madness in those, who understand better Things, to subscribe to a Judgment which they know to be false and erroneous, and to make that the Principle of their Actions. If Vertue is a Thing that is good, just, necessary, acceptable to God, and useful to those who practise it; if with it we cannot fail of Happiness, and if without it there is nothing but Dread and Terror; why should we be ashamed to give up our selves to it? A wise Man ought to esteem that which deserves Esteem, and if ignorant and corrupt People are of another mind, he ought to set himself above their Judgment, and to despise the Contempt of the senseless Multitude. The Judgment of Men cannot make that just which is unjust, nor supersede the necessity

Cause

V.

**Part I.** necessity of what is necessary; so that it should be of no weight in so important a Concernment as that of our Salvation. Our Happiness is not to be decided by Man's Esteem, or Contempt; and the Approbation of God and our Conscience, is infinitely to be prefer'd before their groundless Opinions.

But if there is so much of Error in vicious Shame, there is likewise a great deal of Cowardice in it. Nothing is more base and unworthy than for a Man to desert the Interest of Vertue, when he is sollicitated by his own Conscience to adhere to it. Not to have Resolution enough to do his Duty in such a case, is, on the one hand, to submit his Reason and Conscience to the Caprice of others, and to depress himself below the vilest Things in the World; and on the other, it is to have greater regard for Men than for God. And is there any thing more abject than this Proceeding? Is not this a shameful Cowardice in a Christian, who is call'd to profess openly his Religion and Faith, and ought to think it his Glory to maintain the Cause of Vertue and Justice, in spite of all the Contradiction and Contempt of the Age? That Threatning, which our Saviour has denounc'd against those who should not have the Courage to embrace the Christian Profession, or should abandon it, belongs also to those mean-spirited Christians we

are

are now speaking of. \* *Whoſoever ſhall be aſham'd of me and of my words in this adulterous and ſinful Generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſham'd, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with the Holy Angels.*

Cauſe  
V.

The firſt and chief Remedy againſt this falſe Shame then, is to be poſſeſs'd with the following Reflections. Before all things to have a right Apprehenſion of the Certainty and Importance of Religion; to conſider that it propoſes to us infinite Rewards, but that thoſe Rewards are reſerv'd only for thoſe who have the Courage to obſerve its Precepts; to think what Pleaſure and Glory it is to be approv'd of God and of one's own Conſcience: To fix deeply this great Truth in our Minds, That Mens Judgment is very inconfiderable; that our Felicity depends neither upon their Eſteem nor Contempt: and to remember that the Scripture calls the Men of the World Fools; and that a time will come, when Shame, Confuſion and Miſery ſhall fall to the Lot of thoſe Deſpiſers of Religion; while † Glory, Honour and Peace, ſhall be to every one that does Good.

2. We ſhall eaſily conquer this Shame, if we conſider that the Danger of incurring Mens Contempt or Hatred, by doing our Duty, is not always ſo great as we may imagine. I confeſs Piety is often deſpis'd;

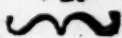
\* Mark VIII. 38. † Rom. II. 10.



Part I. but yet it frequently commands Respect. Even those who think it strange that their Example should not be follow'd, cannot help having a secret Esteem and Veneration for good Men. When Zeal is accompany'd with Meekness and Discretion, there is no fear that a Man should make himself odious or ridiculous by practising Vertue. A Christian Deportment is so far from exposing Men always to the Contempt of the World; that, on the contrary, it frequently happens, that those, who would avoid this Contempt by neglecting their Duty, do thereby bring it upon themselves.

3. There might be yet another Remedy against this vicious Shame, and that is the Example of Men of Authority. Whatever they approve or do, is reputed honourable in the World; and, on the other side, what they despise or neglect, is thought mean and disgraceful. It would therefore be an easy thing to them to correct the Notions which Men commonly have of Religion. As soon as they shall love and honour it, other Men will no longer be ashamed of it, but will place their Glory in practising it. This I am to inlarge upon in the second Part of this Treatise.

CAUSE



## C A U S E VI.

*The delaying of Repentance.*

I Do not know whether any Illusion is more ordinary, or contributes more to the support of Vice in the World, than that which I design to attack in this Chapter, and that is, the delaying of Repentance. We must not believe that Men are so blind and so harden'd, as never to think of their Salvation; there are few who have not a general Intention to obtain it. Even among those who live ill, many are convinc'd that Conversion is necessary, and that they are not yet in a State of Grace. If it be ask'd, Why then they do not repent? I answer, That so unreasonable a Proceeding, which seems so contradictory to it self, ought to be imputed to the hope they entertain of clearing all Scores one Day by Repentance, and of obtaining the Pardon of all their Sins, thro the Divine Mercy. This is the true Cause of the greatest part of those Sins which are committed in the World. It is that deceitful Hope which frustrates all the endeavours that are us'd, to make Men forsake their vicious Habits. The delay of Conversion ought therefore to be plac'd among the Causes of the bad Lives of Christians,

Part I. tians, and the importance of this Subject  
has made me resolve to bestow a particular  
Chapter upon it.

Now to handle this Matter right, we are to observe two different ways of putting off Conversion; for all Men do not delay it in the same manner, and the same Sentiments and Dispositions ought not to be suppos'd in them all. Some put it off to a remote time, and to the very end of their Lives: Others do not adjourn it so long; they design to go about it a good while before Death, at least they hope so, and they put it off to an undetermin'd time. The first sin properly in hopes of Pardon, but the other sin in hopes of Repentance. The former deceive themselves more grossly; they think that in order to be sav'd, it is enough to beg for Mercy, and to repent tho never so late: The Illusion of the others is more subtle, they conceive it is necessary to reform and to forsake Sin, but for all that they do not convert themselves. Tho these two ways of delaying have an affinity with one another, and might in a great measure be encounter'd with the same Arguments, yet I shall consider them here separately.

Men commonly entertain this Opinion, That if they do but repent at the end of their Lives, their Sins will be no hindrance to their Salvation. They allot for this Repentance the Approaches of Death, Old-Age, or the time of Sicknes; and they  
suppose

suppose that then they shall fit themselves for a Christian Death, by confessing their Sins, and having recourse to the Divine Mercy. It is not, I think, needful to prove that this Opinion is very common, for who can deny it? Neither will I go about to shew that it feeds Corruption, and encourages Security, by proposing to Men such a Method of Salvation, as leaves them at liberty to live still in Sin; for that is self-evident. It is more important to let Men see how false and dangerous an Imagination that is which makes them believe, that so they repent before Death, they shall avoid Damnation, and be sav'd. In order to this, we must endeavour to discover the Principle they act upon, and to unfold the true Sentiments of their Hearts.

The delay of Repentance includes two different Motions; the one carries a Man towards Salvation, and the other towards Sin. On the one hand, Man is neither such an Enemy to himself, as to be altogether unconcern'd about his Salvation, nor so blind as not to perceive that Repentance is necessary: On the other hand, he is so addicted to his Lusts, that he cannot resolve to renounce them. In this perplexity, Self-love finds him out an expedient, by which he thinks to reconcile with his Appetites the Care of his Salvation; and that is, that if he sins, yet he intends to repent.



**Part I.**

But here it is manifest, that this Man puts a Cheat upon himself, and that such Sentiments proceed only from Self-love, and from a strong Affection to Sin. Nothing else but the absolute necessity of dying, and of giving an Account to God, obliges him to destine the end of his Life to Acts of Repentance; for it cannot be said that the Love of God and of Vertue has any share in this Conduct. Is it any Love or Regard to God that makes a Man desire him in his last Extremity, and when he can enjoy the World no longer? This shews that a Man thinks of God, only because he expects Salvation at his hands; which is to deal with him as with an Enemy, to whom we surrender our selves as late, and upon as good Terms as we can, and only that we may not perish. Such a Delay includes a positive Resolution to offend God, and to gratify one's Passions at least for the present. He that thinks to repent hereafter, is not willing to repent now. He allots the present time for the satisfying of his Lusts, and for the committing of those Sins which are to be the matter of his future Repentance. This is all that is fix'd and certain in his Resolution: for as to what he promises for the future, it is most uncertain; and if we consider the thing right, he promises nothing at all, for he does not know whether he shall not die very soon, nor what he shall do, in case he lives some time longer.

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The Hazard to which a Man exposes himself by this Delay, is evident. In order to a compleat Repentance, two things are requisite: the first is, to have Time and Opportunity to Repent; the second is, to make use of that Time and Opportunity. Those who put off their Conversion to the last, must suppose that they shall have these two Advantages. But these things are extremely uncertain, and no Man in the World can be sure of them.

1. No Man can promise himself that he shall have Time and Opportunity to repent at the end of his Life. It is true in fact, that more than one Half of Mankind die without having time to prepare for Death. If we reckon up all those who are snatch'd away in an Instant by unforeseen Accidents, or a sudden Death; all those who perish in War; all those who are seiz'd with Distempers which take away their Senses; all those whom the Approaches of Death do not move to Repentance, because they do not apprehend themselves in any danger of dying: And if we add to these, those whose only Preparation is to have a Minister to pray by their Bed-side, when they can hardly hear a few words of what he says; it is certain, that all these together, make up above the Half of Mankind. Upon this I ask, even supposing that it were time enough for a Man to repent when he sees Death coming, Whe-

**Part I.** ther it would not be Folly and Madnes for him to venture his Salvation upon the hope of repenting then?

It seems to many, that it is the way to drive Sinners into Despair, to tell them they ought not to build the hope of Salvation upon what they shall do in the Extremity of Life. But what I have said just now proves evidently, that if Salvation did depend upon the manner of dying, Men must live in continual Fears, and in a kind of Desperation; since their Salvation would depend on a thing, which the half of Mankind cannot reckon upon. On the contrary, nothing is more comfortable to Men, than to know that God grants them their whole Lives to work out their Salvation in; and that if they improve to that purpose the Leisure and Conveniences they have, their Death will be happy, which way soever it may happen. But tho what I have said were not true, and tho all might assure themselves that they should perceive the Approaches of Death, and have time to prepare for that last Passage; yet what certainty have they that they shall make use of that Opportunity, and that their Conversion will not be most difficult, if not impossible? Conversion is not wrought, without God interposing, by those Means which Grace uses for that end. And can any Man flatter himself with the Hope, that these Means shall be offer'd him to the last, and that

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God in his just Anger will not withdraw Cause them from him? There is neither particular Revelation, nor general Promise, to give such Assurances to any Man living. So far from it, that God tells us many things in Scripture, which leave no ground for Hope to those who abuse his Mercy. VI.

But further, What can we imagine that God will do in favour of a hardened Sinner at the time of Death? When God has made use of the Preaching of his Word, of Exhortations, Promises, Threatnings, inward Suggestions and Motions of his Grace; when God, I say, has us'd all these Means for twenty, thirty, or forty Years without any success: I cannot apprehend what Men expect that he should do more at the Hour of Death. If it be said, that he can, by a particular Dispensation, by sudden Inspirations, by a kind of Miracle, convert a Sinner in his last minutes; I will not dispute what God can do; but I will not scruple to say, that in the ordinary course of Grace, Conversion is not wrought by sudden and miraculous Inspirations. The Gospel speaks of nothing like that, and those who look for such Miracles, had best see what they found their Hope upon.

It is certain besides, that Repentance is most difficult on Man's part, when he is at the point of Death. If a Man has liv'd in Ignorance and Vice, is he not in great danger of dying ignorant and harden'd?

How



**Part I.** How will he perform Duties then, of which he has not so much as a Notion? Can a Man at that time change his ill Inclinations, and shake off his vicious Habits of a sudden? All who have apply'd themselves to the Work of Conversion, know by experience, that the Conquest, I will not say of many, but of one single Vice, has requir'd both Time, and assiduous and constant Care. Vicious Habits are not to be destroy'd but by degrees, and good ones are acquir'd only by reiterated Acts. It is repugnant to Man's Nature that this should be done in an instant. How can any one then reckon, that so considerable a Change, as that which true Conversion requires, will be effected in the short time of a Sicknes? And if this was possible, and thro' great Endeavours might be done, yet can any Man assure himself that he shall have then all that freedom, and all that Strength of Mind and Body, which are necessary to set about this general Reformation? Is the time of Sicknes, wherein a Man is so much sunk, and has the least either of Leisure or Strength, so very fit for a Business of this Importance? All that a Man can do then, is to betake himself to some confus'd and abrupt Devotions, the ordinary Refuge of those Sinners who have liv'd in a State of Obduration. But will this serve the turn? Are some hasty Reflections upon a Man's past Life, some Acts of Contrition, some

some Prayers proceeding from Trouble and Cause  
Agony, and extorted only by the Fear of VI.  
Death, some Sobs and Groans indistinctly  
breath'd up to Heaven; are these, I say,  
sufficient to make amends for all that is past,  
to extirpate many inveterate Habits, and  
to secure to a Sinner an Eternity of Bliss?

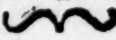
I shall add two Considerations which are  
convincing, and cannot be contested.

1. By growing in Years, Men lose the  
sense and remembrance of their Sins; Age  
and Custom produce this Effect. Except-  
ing some extraordinary Sins which cannot  
be forgot, most Men do not remember their  
Faults. And how should they remember  
them, since for the most part they do not  
perceive when they commit them? We dai-  
ly see Men who will lye and swear, and fly  
out into Passion almost every Minute, and  
yet do not reflect upon it; nay, they think  
themselves free from those faults. This Er-  
ror proceeds so far, that some very great  
Sinners, who are living in criminal Prac-  
tices, fancy themselves pious, and make no  
doubt but that they are in the Favour of  
God. Now since the Custom of Sinning  
does blind Men to such a degree, is it  
likely that after they have spent their  
Lives in this Security, they will effectual-  
ly repent at their Death? Can a Man re-  
pent who does not know the Reasons why  
he should; who does not feel, or has forgot  
his Sins, and who thinks besides that he is  
in

**Part I.** in a good State, and that he needs no Repentance?

2. If Repentance supposes the Knowledge of Sin, it supposes besides a Hatred of it. But he who has lov'd Sin to the last, is less able then to hate, than he is to know his Sins. I cannot comprehend how a Man, who has lov'd the World all his life, who has made it his only Delight and Study to gratify his Lusts, and who has always been cold and indifferent towards Religion, should, when Death appears, suddenly change his Inclinations, hate what he lov'd, and love what till then he look'd upon with indifference: So quick a passage from the Love to the Hatred of Sin is very rare. The Sorrow for Sin, and the Hatred of it, are always faint and weak in the beginnings of Repentance, even in those who repent sincerely. Conversion proceeds by degrees; a Man must have discontinu'd sinning, and be already settled in the Habits of Vertue, before he can have a strong Aversion to Sin. And what kind of Repentance then can that be which begins in the Extremity of Life?

1. But here it is objected, first, That God is always ready to restore the greatest Sinners to his Favour, when they have recourse to his Mercy; and that there are express Promises in the Gospel which assure us of this. I grant it, God never rejects a repenting Sinner: But before a Man can build

build upon this, the hope of being receiv'd Cause  
into God's Favour at the hour of Death, he VI.  
must be sure that he shall then sincerely re-  
pent. Now I think I have demonstrated,   
that this is what no Man can depend upon.  
As to the Promises which are made to Re-  
pentance in the Gospel, I do not deny but  
that they may be apply'd in a good sense to  
all Sinners; but yet it is certain, that they  
are made in favour of those whom God was  
to call to the Christian Religion, and chief-  
ly in favour of the Heathens. Christ and  
his Apostles were to assure all Men, that the  
Sins they had committed should not exclude  
them from the Covenant of Grace, provid-  
ed they did sincerely mourn for them, and  
part with them. When the Heathens came  
to Baptism, nothing else was requir'd of  
them, but that they should repent, and  
make a solemn Vow of being holy for the  
time to come. But as to Christians, it cannot  
be said, that God demands nothing of them  
but Repentance and Sorrow for Sins; for he  
calls them to Holiness upon pain of Dam-  
nation.

In this sense it was that the Apostles  
preach'd Repentance; and by this we may  
know how much Christianity is decay'd.  
That Repentance, which consists in the  
Confession of Sins, and in a Resolution to  
forsake them, is the Duty at which the Hea-  
thens began. This was the first thing which  
the Apostles requir'd of them, it was prepa-  
ratory



Part I. ratory to the Christian Religion. St. Paul

\* places the Doctrine of Repentance among the fundamental Points, and the first Duties in which the *Catechumens* were instructed before Baptism. But now Christians look upon Repentance as the Duty with which they are to end their Lives; that is to say, they design to end where the Heathens began, and to enter Heaven at the same Gate which admitted *Pagans* into the Church.

2. It will be said further, that sometimes Men, who have liv'd in Sin, die to all appearance in very good Dispositions. To this I reply, that we see a great many more of those Persons who die in a State of Insensibility; and that by consequence a Sinner, who puts off Repentance, has more reason to fear than to hope: For who has told him, that the Fate of these last will not be his; and what surer Presage can there be of so tragical a Death, than the present hardness of his Heart? Besides, I do not know whether it happens frequently, as the Objection seems to suppose, that Persons who have liv'd ill, are well-dispos'd when they die. If Repentance can be saving and effectual when it begins only upon a Death-bed, every body must own that it ought to be very lively and deep, attended with Demonstrations of the most bitter Sorrow, and with all the Proofs that a dying man can

Heb. vi. 1. made to be a partaker of the life to come

VIOTET

give

give of the Sincerity of his Conversion: Cause  
But we do not see many instances of this VI.  
nature. There are but few great Sinners  
who express a lively Compunction at their  
Death, or a sincere Detestation of their Sins,  
who have a due sense of their Wickedness,  
and endeavour as much as they can to make  
Reparation for it; who practise Restitution,  
and edify all about them, by discharging  
the other Obligations of Conscience. It is  
but seldom that we see such Penitents.

Besides, the Expressions of Devotion and  
Repentance, which are us'd by dying Men,  
are not always sincere. It is much to be  
fear'd that their Repentance is nothing else  
but a certain Emotion, which the necessity  
of dying, and the Approaches of God's  
Judgment must needs raise in the Mind of  
every Man who has his Wits about him,  
and has some Ideas of Religion. Nothing  
is more deceitful than the judging of a  
Man, by what he either says, or does,  
when he is under the Effects of Fear or  
Trouble. It is commonly said of those  
who have given some Signs of Piety upon  
their Death-beds, that they have made a  
very Christian End; but there is often a  
great mistake in that Judgment. And  
to be satisfy'd of it, we need but observe  
what happens to some who have escaped  
Death, or some eminent Danger. While  
the Peril lasted, who could be more  
humble and holy than they? They shew'd  
so

**Part I.** so much Devotion, and utter'd such Discourses, that all the standers-by were edify'd by them; their Tears, their Prayers, their Protestations of Amendment; in a word, their whole Deportment had, in all appearance, so much of Christian Zeal in it, that the Beholders were struck with Admiration. But are there many of these, who, when the Danger is over, continue in the same Dispositions, remember their Promises, or alter any thing in their former Course of Life? Almost all of them return to their old Habits as soon as the Calamity is past. These are generally the Fruits of that Repentance, which is excited by the Fear of Death, in those who recover: And what Effects then can it have in respect of those that die?

I confess, we ought not to condemn any Body; but I think we should not pronounce a definitive Sentence in favour of those who have led an ill Life. For tho mens Judgment makes no alteration in the state of the Dead; yet it may have a very pernicious effect upon the Living, who conclude from it, that a Man may die well, tho he has liv'd ill: And while I am on this Subject, I must say, that nothing contributes more to the keeping up of these dangerous Opinions than when the Ministers of Religion commend, without Discretion, the Piety of the Dead. And yet this is frequently done, especially in great Towns, and in the Courts of Princes. There  
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There are to be found in those Places, mean-spirited and unworthy Preachers, who prostitute their Tongues and their Pens to the Praise of some Persons, who had nothing of Christianity in their Lives, and whose Condition should rather make a Man tremble. But if some remnant of Shame restrains them from carrying their Flattery so far, as to commend the Lives of those, whose Panegyrick they have undertaken; then they seek the Matter of their Praises, in some signs of Piety, which those Persons gave before they left the World. Now I dare say, that the most Atheistical Discourses, and the corruptest Maxims of Libertines, are not by much so subtil a Poison, as such kind of Eulogies, deliver'd before Men who are engag'd in all the Disorders of the Age, and then dispers'd thro the World.

3. The Instance of the converted Thief, who pray'd to our Saviour upon the Cross, and was receiv'd into Paradise, is seldom forgotten. But this Instance is generally very ill understood. First, it is suppos'd, without any ground for it, that this Thief repented only upon the Cross, and that his Conversion was the effect of a sudden Inspiration. But who can tell whether his Conversion was not begun either before he was taken, or in the Prison, where it is probable that he was kept for some time before the Feast of Passover? But if his Conversion must needs be sudden, and wrought



Part I. only a few minutes before his Death ; if we must of necessity ascribe it to a miraculous Inspiration, and to those singular Circumstances which he then happen'd to be in: yet I do not see what can be infer'd from this Instance, since no Man living can assure himself that any such thing will befall him.

But be that as it will, we should, I think, observe a vast difference between the State of this Thief, and that of a Christian. This poor Wretch had not been call'd before, as Christians are ; he had never known our Saviour, or at least he had not profess'd his Religion ; he had not had that Illumination and those Opportunities, which Grace offers every day to those to whom the Gospel is preach'd. And so his Repentance, tho it came late, yet it might be as effectual to Salvation, as that of the Heathens, who embrac'd Christianity in their riper Years, and who happen'd to die immediately after Baptism.

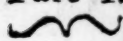
I shall say a word or two upon the Parable of the Labourers, where we read, \* that those who went to work in the Vineyard only an hour before Sun-set, receiv'd the same Wages with those who had been at work ever since the Morning. From this Sinners imagine it may be prov'd by an invincible Argument, that those who repent

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\* Mat. XX.

a little before Death, will obtain the same Cause Reward with those whose Life has been regular. But this was not our Saviour's meaning in that Parable. It signifies only, that those whom God should call last, and who should answer his Call, were to be receiv'd into his Covenant, in the same manner as those who had been call'd to it before, and that the Heathens should share in the same Privileges with the *Jews*, tho the *Jews* had been in Covenant with God a great while before the Heathens. This our Saviour declares in these words, which conclude the Parable: *So the last shall be first, and the first last.* Here is nothing that can be apply'd to those Christians, who delay their Conversion. They are not in the same case with the Labourers, who were sent but late into the Vineyard. Those Labourers went no sooner, *because no Man had hired them*; but they went as soon as they were sent: I say, Christians are not in this case, since they have been call'd in the Morning, and at all the Hours of the Day, being born and having always lived in the Church.

I have been somewhat large in shewing how unreasonable and dangerous the Proceeding of those Men is, who pretend to-repent only at the end of their Lives. But all those who put off their Conversion, do not put it off so far. There are many who acknowledge, that it is dangerous to stay till

Part I.  the extremity, and that it is necessary to repent betimes; they propose to go about it in a little time, and they hope that they shall repent soon enough, not to be surpriz'd by Death under a total hardning: but in the mean while they do nothing toward their Conversion.

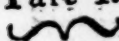
This way of delaying, is an Illusion, which does not appear so gross and dangerous as the former, because it supposes some Inclination to Good. But yet it is no better than an Artifice of the Heart, a Trick of Self-love, by which a Man deceives and blinds himself. Nay, in some respects, the State of these last is more criminal and dangerous; than that of the first. It is more criminal, because they do not what they approve of, and because they sin against the constant Admonitions of their Consciences, and do not perform their Resolutions and their Promises. But it is likewise more dangerous; for with this Intention to repent in a little time, they think themselves much better than those who are resolv'd to repent only upon their Death-bed: they applaud themselves for such a sense of Piety as they have, and they judg that if they are not quite in a State of Salvation, at least they are not far from it. Now one may easily see that such an Opinion of themselves can only lay their Consciences asleep, and inspire them with Presumption and Security.

But

But all things consider'd, they go no farther with these good Dispositions, than those who without shuffling refer the whole matter to the end of their Lives. All the difference is, that the latter do all at once, what the others do successively. And therefore all that has been said in this Chapter, may almost be apply'd to these last. They run the same risque with those who design to repent only upon extremity, since Death may surprize them before they have executed their good Resolutions. They have as little Love for God, and are as much addicted to their Lusts: That which deceives them, is, that they fancy there is in them a sincere Purpose of Conversion. But if this Intention is sincere, how comes it to pass that they do not repent? When a Man is resolv'd upon a thing, when his Heart is in it, when he desires it in good earnest, he goes about it without losing time.

But when a Man uses Delays, it is a sign that he is not well resolv'd yet: A Resolution which no Effect follows, is not a fix'd and settled Resolution. This purpose of Conversion is therefore but one of those wavering Designs and Projects, which are form'd every day, but never accomplish'd. It is no more than a general and unactive Intention, which may perhaps be found in all Men. But other sorts of purposes are necessary for a Man who hopes to be sav'd. Salvation is not obtain'd by bare Designs



Part I. and Projects, but by the actual Practice of  
 Holiness.

Now Men might easily be undeceiv'd, and convince themselves of the Insincerity of all those Resolutions they make in relation to Repentance; if they did but reflect upon the time past, and ask themselves, Whether they have not been very near in the same Sentiments and Resolutions for some years together? And yet these Sentiments have produc'd nothing, and those Resolutions have made no change in them; they are still in the same State, and perhaps farther from Conversion than ever. Must not Men blindfold themselves, when they do not see that it will still be the same thing for the future, and that Life will slip away in perpetual Delays? For what can they promise to themselves from the time to come, and what ground have they to hope that it will not be like the time past? Are they more firmly resolv'd than they were before? When will this Resolution be put in practice? Will it be in a Month, or in a Year? They must confess, they do not know when it will be. So that when they promise to repent, they do not know what they promise; nay, they cannot tell whether they promise any thing. They will say perhaps, that they hope to confirm themselves in a good Purpose; but what do they found this Hope upon? what do they wait for, and what new thing do they imagine will happen

to them? Have they any assurance that Cause  
God will use for their Conversion other VI.  
Means and Motives, than those which he  
has us'd already? Nay, how do they know  
but that they shall be depriv'd of those  
Means and Helps which hitherto have been  
tender'd them? How can they tell whe-  
ther there is a time to come for them, and  
whether their Life is not just ready to end?  
All this is very uncertain. But what is cer-  
tainly true, is this, that thro so many Pro-  
crastinations, their Hearts grow harder, and  
their Return to Vertue becomes more diffi-  
cult. The Love of Sin increases by the  
Habit of sinning, and the Means appointed  
to work Repentance, lose something of their  
force every day.

These Considerations do evidently shew,  
that the deferring of Conversion is an Er-  
ror as gross as it is dangerous.

I think it will not be useless, to conclude  
this Chapter with observing that the reason  
why so many put off their Conversion, is,  
because they look upon Repentance as an  
austere and melancholy Duty. And this  
Notion must needs put them upon deferring  
the Practice of it. It is therefore of the  
greatest moment, to destroy that Prejudice;  
and to shew on the contrary, that if there  
is any sad and deplorable Condition, it is  
that of a Man who lives in Sin. For that  
is either a State of Fear and Uncertainty,  
or of Security and Insensibility. Such a

Part I. Man can have no solid Peace of Conscience during his Life; and what Agitations must he fall into, when the thoughts of Death and of a Judgment to come, happen to make some lively Impression upon his Mind? For granting that then he may use some endeavours to dispose himself to Repentance, yet besides the danger of a late Repentance, it is a sad thing to end one's Life in those Struggles and Terrors, which must needs accompany such a Repentance. A Man who delays his Conversion, prolongs his Misery, and makes it greater and more incurable: But Joy and Tranquillity are the Portion of a pure Conscience. There is no Felicity or Contentment like that of a Soul which is freed from the Bondage of Sin. Repentance is the beginning of that Happiness, which grows sweeter and more perfect, according to the progress we make in Vertue. Then it is that a Man is happy in all the Circumstances of Life, besides that he has the Comfort of being supported at the approaches of Death, with that Peace and Joy, which flow from a well-grounded Confidence in the Divine Mercy, from the Testimony of a good Conscience, and from a steady hope of Immortality,

CAUSE

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C A U S E VII.

*Mens Sloth and Negligence in Matters of  
Religion.*

**I**T is natural and ordinary to Men, to be unconcern'd about those things which they do not know, or of which they do not apprehend the Use and Necessity. And so we may easily conceive that Men living in Ignorance, and being possess'd with those Notions I have now confuted, must needs be very negligent and slothful, in what relates to Religion. But as this Sloth, consider'd in it self, is a visible Cause of Corruption, so it will be fitting to take particular notice of it in this Chapter.

I suppose, in the first place, that it is impossible for a Man to attain the End which Religion proposes to him, without using the proper Means which lead to that End. In religious as well as in worldly Concerns, nothing is to be had without Labour and Care. As there are Means appointed for preserving the Life of the Body, so there are some ordain'd for maintaining the Life of the Soul; and the use of these last Means is of the two the more necessary, because there is more care and forecast requisite



**Part I.** *quisite* in order to Salvation, about preserving the Life of the Soul, than for supporting that of the Body. It is certain that the more excellent any thing is, the more it requires our Care; but besides that we see the Life of the Body is easily preserv'd, a natural Inclination prompts us to those things which are necessary for our Subsistence; and the means of supplying our bodily Wants offer themselves to us, as it were of their own accord. But it is not so with the spiritual Life. Considering our Proneness to Evil, and the present State we are in, we cannot avoid being undone, if we neglect the necessary Care of our Souls, and if we follow all the Bents and Propensions of our Nature. Religion obliges us upon many occasions to resist our Inclinations, and to offer violence to our selves; it requires Self-denial, Watchfulness, and Labour; it lays many Duties upon us, and it prescribes divers Means, without the use of which we cannot but continue still in Corruption and Death: I shall then but just name the chiefest of those Duties and Means.

Before all things, a Christian ought to be instructed, he ought to know with some exactness both the Truths and the Duties of Christianity. Now this Knowledg cannot be acquir'd without Hearing, Reading, Meditation, or some other Care of this nature. In the next place, as Religion does not consist in bare Knowledg, but chiefly  
in

in Practice ; none of those Means should be Cause neglected, which are proper to divert Men VII, from Vice, and to spur them on to Vertue. ~

These Means are very many, but they are all comprehended under these two principal Heads : The Exercises of Devotion, and the Circumspections which every Person ought to use.

The Exercises of Devotion are mighty Helps to Piety and Salvation ; I mean such as Meditation, Reading, and particularly Prayer, which is one of the most essential Acts of Religion, as well as one of the most efficacious Means to advance Holiness. There are on the other hand several Methods of Circumspection and Care, which are of absolute necessity : as for instance, the foreseeing and shunning the occasions which may draw us into Sin ; the seeking those Opportunities and Aids which promote Piety, the not being over-much concern'd about the Body, the cherishing good Thoughts, and the resisting evil ones : But above all, it is a thing of the greatest importance, that every one should endeavour thorowly to know himself ; which he cannot do, but by examining his present State, and by reflecting seriously and frequently upon his Actions and Words, and upon the Thoughts and Motions of his Heart. All these Cares are essential and necessary. For without the use of those Means, it is as impossible to be Religious and Pious, as it would

**Part I.** would be to live and subsist without Nourishment. A Man who will neither eat nor drink, must needs die in a little time. And so the spiritual Life will soon be extinct, if the only means which can support it, are not us'd.

Let us now see, whether these Cares and Means which I have shewn to be necessary, are made use of. It is so visible, that they are almost totally neglected, that I need not be very large upon the proof of it.

Men take little care of being instructed, and of getting Information and Knowledge about Religion. The far greater part either cannot read, or never apply themselves to any useful instructive Reading. Few hearken to the Instructions that are given them, and fewer yet examine or reflect upon them. Carnal Lusts and secular Business do so engross them, that they seldom or never give themselves to searching the Truth. They generally have an Aversion to spiritual Things. Hence it is, that in matters of Religion they will rather believe implicitly what is told them, than be at the pains of enquiring whether it is true or not. And they are every whit as careless about Exercises of Devotion. Many would think it a Punishment if they were made to read or to meditate. They never do those things but with reluctancy, and as seldom as they can. They go about Prayer especially with a strange Indifference, and a criminal Indevotion.

devotion. In short, very few take the necessary Cause  
Care to preserve themselves from VII.  
Vice, and to behave themselves with Regu-  
larity and Caution; very few seek the Op-  
portunities of doing Good, and avoiding the  
Temptations to which the common Condi-  
tion of Men, or their own particular Cir-  
cumstances expose them: And the greatest  
number are slaves to their Bodies, and whol-  
ly taken up with earthly things. One of  
the most sensible and fatal effects of this  
Negligence is, that those Persons use no  
manner of endeavours to know themselves.  
It is very seldom, if ever, that they reflect  
upon what passes within them; upon their  
Thoughts, their Inclinations, the Motions  
of their Hearts, and the Principles they  
act upon; or that they take a review of  
their Words and Actions. They do not  
consider whether they have within them the  
Characters of good Men, or of wicked and  
hypocritical Persons. In a word, almost all  
of them live without Reflection.

Mens carelesness about Religion is there-  
fore extremely great. But they proceed o-  
therwise in the things of the World, about  
which they are as Active and Laborious as  
they are Lazy and Cold in reference to true  
Piety. They will do every thing for their  
Bodies, and nothing for their Souls. They  
spare no Industry or Diligence, they omit  
nothing to promote their Temporal Con-  
cerns. If we were to judg by their Con-  
duct,



**Part I.**

duct, we would think that the Supreme Good is to be found in earthly Advantages, and that Salvation is the least important of all things.

I need not say what effects such a Negligence must produce. The greater part of Christians being ignorant in their Duty, having no Knowledg of themselves, declining the use of those Means which God has appointed, and without which he declares that no Man can be sav'd; and wearing out their Lives in this Ignorance and Sloth, it is not to be imagin'd that they can have any Religion or Piety; and so there must be a general Corruption amongst them. I say, it must be so; unless God should work Miracles, or rather change the Nature of Man, and invert the Order and the Laws which he has establish'd.

But because it might be said that Christians do not live like Atheists, and that their Negligence is not so great as I represent it; let us consider a little, what sort of Care they bestow upon the Concerns of their Souls. Certainly there are some Persons who are not guilty of this Negligence: But excepting these, what is it which the rest of Mankind do, in order to their Salvation? Very little or nothing. They pray, they assist sometimes at divine Service, and at the publick Exercises of Religion; they hear Sermons, they receive the Sacrament, and they perform some other Duties

Duties of this nature. This is all which Cause the Religion of the greatest part amounts VII. to. But first, these are not the only Duties which ought to be practis'd; there are others which are not less essential, and which yet are generally neglected; such as Meditation, Reading, Self-examination; to say nothing here of the Duties of Sanctification. So that if some Acts of Religion are performed, others are quite omitted. The reason of this Proceeding may easily be discover'd. There is a Law and a Custom, which oblige all Persons to some Acts of Religion; to pray, to receive the Sacrament, and to go now and then to Church: If a Man should intirely neglect those external Duties, he would be thought an Atheist. But there is neither Custom nor Law, nor worldly Decency, which obliges a Man to meditate, to examine his own Conscience, or to watch over his Conduct; and therefore these Duties being left to every one's Direction, are very little observ'd.

As to the other Duties which Christians perform in some measure, the want of sincerity in them does most commonly turn them into so many Acts of Hypocrisy. They perhaps say some Prayers in the Morning; but this is done without Devotion, hastily, with distraction and weariness, and only to get rid of it; after they think no more of God all the Day,  
but

Part I. but are altogether busied about the World and their Passions; and in the Evening they pray with greater wandring of Thoughts than in the Morning. If it so fall out, that they go to Church, or hear a Sermon, they do not give a quarter of an Hour's close attention to any thing that is said or done in the publick Assemblies. In many places the whole Devotion of the People consists in being present at some Sermons, which are as little instructive as they are minded or hearken'd to. The use which is made of the Sacraments, and especially of the Eucharist, converts them into vain Ceremonies, and makes them rather Obstacles, than helps to Salvation. As to the mortifying of the Body by reasonable Abstinence, Fasting and Retirement, it is an unknown Duty. The Indifference of Christians is therefore but too palpable. What they do upon the account of Religion, is very little; and yet they do that little so ill, that it is not much more beneficial to them, than if they did nothing at all.

And now what might not be said, if after having thus shewn, that what Men do for their Salvation is next to nothing, I should undertake to prove that they do almost every thing that is necessary for their Damnation; and that they are zealous and industrious for their Ruin, as they are slothful and negligent in what is requisite to preserve them? There

are

are means to corrupt as well as to sanctify our selves. The means of Corruption and Perdition, are Ignorance, want of Attention, neglect of Devotion, the love of the World, and of the Flesh, unruly Passions, Temptations, and ill Examples. Now supposing that a Man was so monstrously frantick, as to form the design of damning himself; what would such a Man do? He would neglect the exercises of Devotion, he would not pray at all, or he would pray only with his Lips; he would profane the Sacraments by an unsanctify'd use of them; he would only mind his Body and this present Life; he would give loose Reins to his Passions; as much as he might with decency and without danger: if he had an opportunity to gratify his Sensuality, his Covetousness, his Pride, or any other wicked Affection, he would gladly embrace it. This is what a Man would do to damn himself: And is it not what a great many actually do? I confess, no Man is capable of so wild a Resolution, as to design to damn himself; but a Man sufficiently damns himself, when he takes no care of his Salvation, and when he does those things which will infallibly bring his Perdition after them.

The sloth and negligence of Men in the concerns of their Souls, being one of the causes of their Corruption, it would be highly necessary to remedy that negligence, and to inspire them with Zeal for Religion: but



Part I. it is hard to succeed in this; Laziness is attended with a certain sweetness to which Men give up themselves with Pleasure. The slothful do love and delight in Rest; they cannot endure to be egg'd on to Labour. This is one of those Habits which are most difficult to be conquer'd; and to say the Truth, there is but little hope of those, in whom it is grown inveterate: It is a great Task to rouse them out of that sluggish and lethargick Temper. God must interpose by a particular Grace, by great Afflictions, or by some other extraordinary Method.

But yet, I do not think it altogether impossible to overcome this sinful and dangerous Sloth, or to preserve those from it, whom it has not seiz'd as yet. Serious Reflections upon the importance of Salvation, and upon the necessity of working at it, may produce that Effect. Men would not live in this carelessness, but that either they do not apprehend of what Consequence it is to be saved; or that they imagine there is not much to be done for the obtaining of Salvation. These two Prejudices maintain their Laziness. Nothing can therefore be more useful than to convince them on the one hand, that nothing in the World is of greater moment than Religion; and that eternal Happiness is the highest of all Concernments: And to let them see on the other hand, that this Felicity is not to be attain'd,

but

but by assiduous Care, and an exact observation of the Duties of Christianity.

Cause  
VII.

I know it is difficult to make Men seriously enter upon these Reflections; but yet they ought still to be laid before them, and we should not give over. If they have no effect at one time, there are Circumstances in which they will prove successful. I think, few would continue in this sluggish Disposition, if they did represent to themselves what notions and thoughts they shall have at the end of their Lives. Every Man is satisfy'd that he must die one Day, and that his condition will then be the happiest that can be conceiv'd, if he has made use of the time and opportunities he had to secure his Salvation; but that if he has neglected these Means, he shall find himself in strange Agonies, and be reduc'd to dismal Extremities. When Death appears, when the World vanishes, a Man is then wholly taken up with Religion; he would give then all the World, if it was in his possession, to secure to himself a better Life. Now since we all know that this must one day be our Case, Wisdom requires that we should overcome betimes that Negligence, of which the Consequences will be so fatal; and that we should apply our selves with earnestness and pleasure to that Work, upon which our sovereign Felicity depends.

## C A U S E VIII.

*Worldly Business.*

**N**egligence commonly proceeds, either from Indifference, or from Distraction. We neglect those things, which we look upon with indifference; but we frequently also neglect things of Moment, because we are distracted by other Cares. These are the two Causes of Mens carelessness in matters of Religion. On the one hand, Piety is indifferent to them, they neither know the Nature nor the Excellency of it; the Duties which it prescribes do not appear very pleasant or necessary to them; they love and esteem only the Things of the World: all this I have prov'd in the foregoing Chapters. On the other hand, they are distracted by temporal Cares, which rob them of the leisure and freedom, that are necessary for the study and practice of Religion. Worldly business is therefore another source of Corruption, as I hope to prove by the following Considerations.

I reckon among worldly Employments, all those Cares which relate to the World, or this present Life, whether they take up the Body or the Mind. There are temporal Cares which properly take up the Body;

dy; such are the Cares of Mechanicks or Husbandmen : and there are other secular Cares which chiefly employ the Mind ; such is the study of human Learning, of Politicks, or Philosophy. These last as well as the first ought to be counted worldly business. Nay, we may observe that difference between these two sorts of temporal Employments; that the Cares which take up the Mind are sometimes the more dangerous. While the Body is at work, the Mind may be at liberty; but when the Mind is employ'd, when the Heart is distracted and possess'd with temporal Cares, it is much harder for the Thoughts of Religion to enter, or to make any impression upon a Man.

But whether these Employments relate to the Mind or to the Body, we ought not to think that they are of themselves hindrances to Piety. For this imagination would be a very gross Error. Worldly business is Lawful and Necessary, and it were a Sin to neglect it, since that would be contrary to the Order which God has establish'd in the World. Nay, it may be useful to our Salvation, it may divert ill Thoughts, it may take off Men from trifling and vicious Employments; and it may serve to mortify the Body, and to banish Idleness, which is the cause of all manner of Vice.

I make this remark, because some People fancy that in order to be sav'd, it must be



**Part I.** necessary to live in an absolute Retirement, to lay aside all temporal Cares, and to give up our selves wholly to spiritual Exercises, to Reading, Contemplation, Meditation and Prayer. But those who do thus stretch the Obligation of renouncing the World, and insist so much upon a retir'd and contemplative Life, do not, I doubt, very well understand the nature of Piety, nor do any great service to it. Sometimes by endeavouring to spiritualize Men too much, we spoil all, and we make Piety appear ridiculous or impracticable. We should always remember that Piety is made for Man. Now it is not one in Fifty that can thus embrace Retirement, and absolutely renounce the World. I am far from condemning Retirement; it is sometimes very seasonable, and I think in some sense necessary to all Men. There are some Persons who for the sake of their Salvation, or the Edification of the Church, ought to chuse a retir'd Life, disingag'd from temporal Cares. Others are call'd to that kind of Life by the Circumstances which Providence has plac'd them in. And besides, there is no Christian but ought to allow himself some times of Retirement; nay, there are some temporal Employments which do not hinder a Man to live in a retir'd manner. But after all, it would be the ruin of Society, and of most Christian Vertues, if every one should live apart, and busy himself only in spiritual Exercises.

Exercises. God do's not require this; he has created Man to labour in the World; and those who follow an honest Employment in it, act suitably to his Will, and their business may prove a help to their Salvation.

I need not, I think, advertise the Reader that I speak here only of lawful Employments, and not of those which are bad, and contrary to the Laws of Nature or Religion: and yet these last are very common. But because every body may easily see that such Occupations must unavoidably engage Men in Sin, I will make it my chief business to shew, that lawful and innocent Employments prove to many Persons a hindrance to Piety and Salvation.

Temporal Employments then being not bad in themselves, they cannot occasion Corruption but by the abuse that is made of them. Now there are four Faults which Men commit in this matter.

1. The first is, when they are intirely taken up with worldly Things. We have shew'd already, that Men live in a prodigious sloth and carelesness about Religion, and that they do almost nothing for their Souls and their Salvation. From this it follows, that they must be employ'd only about their Bodies, and the Concerns of this Life. And in fact, if we inquire into their Cares, we shall find that they terminate in the World, and in their temporal Interest; and this I think needs not be prov'd.

Part I.

2. Their Hearts sink too deep into the things of the World. The business of Life is innocent when it is follow'd with moderation; but it diverts Men from Piety, when it is pursu'd more, and with greater eagerness than it deserves. That excessive love of the World, makes the unhappiness of Men. Instead of esteeming temporal Goods in proportion to their worth, and as remembering that they are not able to procure them true Felicity; instead of considering that they are not made for this Life only, and that they cannot long enjoy those advantages which they court; they give up themselves wholly to the World, they set their Hearts and Affections upon it, and they act as if this Life was the ultimate end of all their Actions. They labour only for their Bodies, and for the gratifying of their Appetites. This is the mark aim'd at in all their Thoughts and Projects: This is what inflames their Desires, and what excites in them the most violent Passions of Grief or Joy, of Anxiety or Impatience. They are far from having such a hearty concern for Religion and Piety. In relation to this, their Affections are faint and languid, and they do nothing but with indifference, or by constraint.

3. The Third Fault is, when Men are too much employ'd, and when they over-load themselves with Business. It is a great piece of Wisdom both in respect of the Tranquilli-

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ty of this Life, and the concerns of another, Cause to avoid the excess and hurry of Business VIII. as much as possibly we may, without being wanting to the Duties of our Calling; to confine our selves to necessary Cares, and to wave all superfluous ones. Men would live happy if they did but know what their Profession requires of them, and limit themselves to it, without meddling in that which does not concern them. But here they observe no bounds, they will fly at all, they will busy themselves about many things which do not belong to their Province. This without doubt is a dangerous Disease, and the occasion of several Disorders.

4. In the last place, there is one thing more to blame, and that is when worldly Business becomes an occasion of Sin, by the abuse that is made of it. For besides that it is a very ill Disposition in a Christian to be fond of the World; most Men are so unhappy as to direct all the business of Life to a bad End, which is to satisfy and to enflame the more their irregular Appetites. And by this means, many Enterprizes and particular Actions of theirs, which in themselves are innocent, become evil and unlawful, and engage them in all manner of Sins.

These Considerations prove already, that the greatest part of Mens Vices proceeds from their temporal Affairs; but this will appear yet more clearly by the following Reflections,

1. This



## Part I.

1. This excessive Application to temporal Concerns, engrosses almost our whole Time, so that it does not leave us a sufficient share of it, to be spent in Cares of another nature. Men confess this themselves, and plead it for an excuse. They alledg their business. A Man who is ingag'd in the World will say, *I have no time to Read, or to perform the Exercises of Religion; I have too much Business, my Employ or my Calling does not leave me a minute of leisure.* And the Truth is, they are too busy for the most part. If they have any spare time, some Hours or some Days of rest, wherein the course of their ordinary Employments is interrupted; they are not in a condition, to improve to the best advantage those short Intervals of Relaxation.

2. And truly, secular Business does not only take away the best part of Mens time, but it does besides distract their Minds, and invade their Hearts and Affections. When for a whole Day or Week the Mind and Body have been in agitation, a Man is weary and spent, the activity of his Thoughts is exhausted, his Head is too full to be clear, he is not able to drive away in an instant so many worldly Ideas, to calm his Passions, and to turn himself of the sudden to spiritual Exercises. So that he must either absolutely neglect the Duties of Piety, or perform them very ill. When a Man has brought himself to a Habit of being employ'd only

in

in worldly Affairs, he is no longer master Cause of his own Thoughts and Motions. It is VIII. with great difficulty, if he can at all apply himself to Objects that are foreign to him. Those Objects affect him but weakly ; he must make great Efforts, before he can fasten upon them ; and if he fixes there for a few moments, it is a violent state in which he cannot continue long. Those thoughts of which he is constantly full, croud in upon him, and he returns immediately to those Things which he loves, and which commonly take him up.

This is the true reason, why Men love and relish spiritual Things so little, and why they think it so hard to subdue their Minds with Reading, Attention and Meditation. This is particularly the main source of Indevotion in the exercises of Piety. Why is the Mind so apt to wander in Prayer ? The too great Application to temporal Affairs is the Cause of it. As soon as a Man is awake in the morning, a throng of thoughts and a multiplicity of designs and business break in upon his Mind, and take possession of his Heart ; he is fill'd with these things all the Day, he follows and plods upon them without Distraction or Interruption. And how is it to be imagin'd that amidst all this hurry and turmoil, he should find that Recollection, that Tranquillity, and that Elevation, without which the exercises of Piety are but mere Hypocrisy ? Whence comes it  
to

**Part I.** to pass that Men bring so little attention and sincerity with them to the publick Worship of God? Why do Sermons produce so little Fruit? Why do the most certain and important Truths of Religion, the clearest and the most solid Reasonings, make either no Impression at all, or at least no lasting one upon the Hearers? What is the reason, why in the most solemn Devotions, and particularly in the Holy Communion, it is so difficult for Men to lift up their Hearts to God, and to shake off a thousand idle or sinful Thoughts, which come then to amuse and distract them? And lastly, Why do those Vows and Promises which are made even with some sincerity, prove so ineffectual? Why do the best Resolutions vanish so easily and so soon? All this comes from Mens being too much taken up with temporal Cares.

3. These excessive Cares do not only distract the Mind, but they do besides directly obstruct Sanctification, and lead Men into Sin. For first it is impossible to love Religion and Vertue, when the Heart is set upon the World. Our Saviour tells us, \* *That no Man can serve two Masters*; and St. John declares, † *That the Love of God is not in those who love the World*. There is such an Opposition between bodily and spiritual Exercises, that those who give themselves

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\* Mat. VI. 24. † 1 John II. 15.

up to the first, are incapable of the others. Cause  
 Worldly Occupations render Men carnal, VIII.  
 sensual and dull; they keep up ignorance  
 and foment sloth, and they weigh down all  
 their inclinations and thoughts to the Earth,  
 so that they must be careless and indifferent  
 about spiritual Objects and heavenly Con-  
 cerns. And indeed they are very ill dispos'd  
 to value those good Things as they deserve;  
 or to seek them with that eagerness and sin-  
 cerity which they ought. Can we think  
 that Men who propose nothing else to them-  
 selves but the amassing of Wealth, the ma-  
 king their Court, or the canvassing for Pla-  
 ces; and who live and toil only for such  
 things, should have a due sense of the con-  
 cerns of their Salvation? It is hard to ima-  
 gine it.

But further, Religion do's not allow Chri-  
 stians to love the World, or to cleave to it.  
 \* It requires, that *they should possess Temporal*  
*Goods as not possessing them*, and that *they*  
*should use the World, as not abusing it*; because  
 on the one hand, *the Figure of the World*  
*passes away*, and it would be a folly to  
 fix their Hearts upon vain and transitory  
 Enjoyments: And on the other hand, they  
 ought to aspire chiefly to the possession of  
 solid and eternal Happiness. To be there-  
 fore taken up only with earthly Things,  
 and to let them enter too deep into one's

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\* 1 Cor. VII. 31.



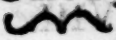
**Part I.** Heart, is a Disposition quite contrary to that which a Christian ought to be in.

4. Lastly, An excessive Application to temporal Affairs hurries a Man into many disorders. We need but reflect a little to be satisfy'd, that a Man who is fill'd only with the thoughts and sollicitudes of this Life, must be a Slave to his Senses and Passions; and that he lays himself open every moment to a thousand Temptations, which he is not able to withstand. Tho his Employments are lawful in themselves, yet he makes them criminal, because to him they are only means of gratifying his Appetites. And the greatest mischief is, that when a Man is once entred upon that Course, he still confirms himself in it, so that at last he cannot leave it off. On the one hand, his Passions are still mounting higher; on the other, business and toil grow upon him. He first proposes an End to himself, and then he will bring it about at any rate, as being engag'd in Honour and by Interest not to desist. If he meets with Obstacles, he will do any thing to surmount them. If he succeeds, Success animates him with new Ardour; he is for going further: In a word, it is an endless labour, a continual Succession of Cares, which are still growing greater, and which end only with his Life.

From all this we may conclude, that the abuse of worldly business is most dangerous, and that if we would not have it obstruct  
our

our Salvation, we ought to observe these Cause  
three Rules. VIII.

The First is, That we should pursue the things of this World with moderation. One of the most useful Directions for a happy Life, is this; to lay nothing too much to heart. The way to preserve our Innocence and Tranquillity, is to crave nothing too eagerly; not to rejoice excessively at any Prosperity, not to be dejected above measure for any Disasters which may happen, and not to be too hot and peremptory upon any Design. The second Caution to be us'd, is the avoiding multiplicity of Business, and excess of Employments, as much as is consistent with the Duties of our Calling. Every one should consider what he is fit for, and what he is called to, and go no farther. In the last place, Wisdom requires that among all the Affairs of this Life, we should reserve the necessary time and care to pay what we owe to God, and to mind our Salvation, the most important of all Concerns. To this end it is very useful to have certain times of Retirement and Leisure, and to accustom our selves to make now and then even in the midst of temporal Employments, such Reflections as may call us back to our Duty, and be like a Counterpoise to that Bias which carries us toward sensible Objects. Let us often think that we are mortal, that we have a Soul, and that there is another Life after this. Let us consider  
what

**Part I.**  what all our worldly Cares terminate in, and what Judgment we shall make of them upon our Death-Beds. These Reflections will put us upon wise and moderate Courses, and so we shall avoid innumerable disorders and miseries which Men fall into, by their too great Application to temporal Business.

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CAUSE IX.

*Mens particular Callings.*

**T**H O we have seen already that Corruption had its source in the abuse of worldly Business, yet it may be proper to insist a little more upon this matter, and to consider it with relation to the different States and Callings which Men are engag'd in. When we speak of worldly Business, we mean chiefly those things about which the greatest part of Life is spent. Now those Occupations must needs be suitable to the particular kind of Life which a Man follows. And so every Man's kind of Life may be a Source, or at least an accidental Cause of Corruption.

As the World is constituted, it is necessary that there should be different Professions among Men, that some should cultivate the Earth, that others should apply themselves to Arts and Trades, and that others should exercise Magistracy or Traffick. The difference of Sex, Age, Condition, and other Circumstances, creates a great variety in relation to particular Callings. Now this diversity of Employments and Conditions is innocent in it self; the World subsists, the Society is preserv'd by it. But yet it cannot be

P deny'd,



Part I. deny'd, but that a great part of the Disorders, which happen in the World, proceeds from the kind of Life which Men chuse, and from the particular State they are in; and that because they abuse it, and do not demean themselves in it, with Caution and Prudence. The Proof of this shall conclude the first part of this Treatise.

But here we are to use some distinction. There are Callings which are bad in themselves, and others which are Lawful and Innocent; they are not all therefore equally dangerous, and some produce Corruption more necessarily than others.

All Professions or Callings are not Lawful, some are Unlawful and Criminal. The World is full of People, who make Sin it self their ordinary Calling and Profession. There are infinite numbers, who instead of following an honest Employment, subsist only by the Sins they commit themselves, or which they make others commit. This might easily be prov'd by abundance of Instances. How many are there, whose Trade is a constant practice of Obscenity, Leudness and Debauchery, of Artifice and Intrigue, Lying and Knavery? How many are there who are profess Extortioners and Cheats, who are always employ'd in acts of Injustice, Cruelty and Violence? Nay, there are Societies form'd for that purpose; the Trade of Robbing, of punishing the Innocent, and that by committing

ting rapine by Sea and Land, is erected into an honourable and lawful Employment. Cause IX.

Many Persons are suffer'd at this day among Christians, whose Profession was formerly counted infamous: Many are tolerated who are only Ministers of Voluptuousness, and whose only business it is to introduce Licentiousness of Manners, to corrupt the Youth by training them up to the love of Pleasure, and to a luxurious and effeminate Life; and to furnish those who are inclin'd to Debauchery, Sensuality, Idleness or Gaming, with the means to gratify their Inclinations. Now all these Professions are not only inseparable from Sin, but they likewise make way for all kind of Vice among Christians.

We ought to pass almost the same Judgment upon the way of living of those, who without making a publick Profession of Vice, propose no other end to themselves in this World, but the pleasing of their Appetites. Some have no other view than to enjoy the Pleasures of Life, and they level their whole Conduct at that mark. Others desiring to grow Rich, or to raise themselves to Honours, make no scruple of using all the means which Interest, Ambition and Injustice, have establish'd in the World. They make use of Fraud, Violence and Oppression: it is their Maxim and their Study to dissemble their Sentiments, and to do mischief to those who stand in their way. In a word, they betake themselves

**Part I.** to every thing that may further the success of their Designs. Such a method of Life is manifestly contrary to the Spirit of Christianity; and it must needs be highly sinful, since both the end of it, and the means us'd to obtain that end, are so.

There are other kinds of Life, which do not seem altogether so bad, and yet are not much better. This may particularly be said of Idleness. The Profession of many is to have none at all, and to be as little employ'd as they can. They think it the happiest of all Conditions to have nothing to do, and to live at Rest and free from Action. But yet it is unworthy of a Man, and much more of a Christian, to be useless in the World. And if this idleness is shameful and culpable in it self, it is much more so in its Effects and Consequences. It betrays Men into frivolous or dangerous Pastimes: For a Man cannot be perfectly Idle. The want of useful business must be supply'd with Amusements; and those Amusements are generally sinful. Thus we see multitudes of People, who excepting the time which they must needs bestow upon the necessities of Nature, and upon some external and indispensable acts of Religion, consume the best part of their Lives at Play, or in Diversions, in unprofitable Reading and Conversations, in meeting Companies, in receiving or returning Visits, or in other such things, which tho they are thought innocent,

nocent, yet they enervate the Mind, they devour Time, they enslave a Man to the Opinions and Modes of the World, and they make him most frequently transgress the Laws of Religion. It would not be difficult to apply this to *professed* Gamesters, to those who spend their time in trifling Discourses and impertinent Visits, and to many other Persons. I might easily shew, if it was necessary, that such a Life has little of Christianity in it, and that it is a great deal more to blame than is commonly believ'd.

Thus Men follow divers kinds of Life, which are essentially bad, and wherein by consequence, Purity of Heart, and Innocency of Life cannot be preserv'd.

As to those kinds of Life and Occupations which are Lawful, I might observe in the first place, that for the most part Men are too much wedded to them, and that they commonly abuse them. But I will not press this Consideration, having shewn already in the foregoing Chapter, that too great Application to temporal Affairs, robs Men both of the Time, and of that Inclination and Freedom which are necessary to mind spiritual Things, and that it makes them dull, earthly-minded, sensual and Slaves to their Passions. To speak then only of what concerns particular Callings, I shall observe these two general Faults.

Cause  
IX.



## Part I.

1. It is a great mischief that Men embrace Professions which are not fit for them. Every Profession requires some particular Qualifications and Talents; and since all Men have not those Qualifications, it follows that all Men are not fit for all Employments, and that distinction and choice are to be us'd in pitching upon a Profession. The welfare of Societies and of particular Persons, does in a great measure depend upon that choice. If no care is taken of this, Employments must be ill discharg'd, and from thence a great many disorders will arise both in Church and State.

Now if we take a survey of the different Callings which Men are engag'd in, we shall find they are often destitute of those Qualifications which are necessary for the right discharging of them. And the worst of it is, that this happens in the most considerable Employments, and in those which might contribute most to the preserving of Order, and the encouraging of Vertue in the World. As to Professions of lesser Importance, the choice is much easier; every body almost is capable of them, and the Faults which may be committed there, are not of great consequence. If a Husbandman does not well understand his business, or a Mechanick his Trade, no great inconveniency will ensue from thence in relation to Society. But when publick Employments are in the hands of Men who are not qualified

lified for them, it is hard to tell how much mischief is occasion'd by it. Is it not, for instance, a lamentable thing, that so many Persons should dedicate themselves to the Church, who want the Talents requisite for so high a Function; and that so many who might do great Service in that Profession do not embrace it? By this it happens that some of those who are plac'd at the Helm in several Churches, want both Learning and Probity, and that Religion is very ill administred; so that the People being without Instruction or Conduct, live in Ignorance and Disorder. The same may be said of the Office of Magistrates, when it is entrusted to those who are not proper for it.

2. Lawful Callings may prove great occasions of Corruption and Disorder, both in respect of those who embrace them, and of the Publick, when they are ill-exercised, when the Duties annex'd to them are neglected; when Men do not watch against the Temptations which are particular to them, and when they look upon them only as means to gratify their Inclinations to get Mony, to have a Rank, to gain Credit, or to humour some other Passion. I might enter here upon many particulars; but because this would lead me too far, I shall confine my self to a few instances.

It would be very proper to speak here of the Profession of Churchmen, and of the Office of Princes, Magistrates and Judges;

Part I. and to shew how pernicious both these kinds of Life prove often, not only to those who are rais'd to them, but likewise to Church and State. But these two Articles are of too great moment, to be touch'd upon only by the by. They are two general causes of Corruption, which deserve to be purposely handled, and which are to have a place in the second Part of this Book.

The Profession of Military Men, is a kind of Life which corrupts vast Multitudes. I do not condemn the Profession in general. It is Lawful, a Man may live in it like a Christian; and there are Persons in Military Employments, of a solid Vertue and an exemplary Piety. But it must be confess'd, that the number of those Persons is not great; and that for the generality, the Maxims and Deportment of the Men of that Profession agree very little with the Rules of Christianity. Those who follow the Employments of War, are for the most part Men of loose and vicious Principles. Every body knows, that if on the one hand some good Men are found to embrace this Profession, on the other hand it is the ordinary Receptacle, and the last Shift, of idle and debauch'd People, and of those who are overwhelm'd with Poverty and Misery. Besides, how do Men live in that Profession? Saving some few disorders which Military Discipline does not allow of, every thing is lawful there; I speak of what is commonly observ'd.

observ'd. To spend their Life in Idleness Cause  
and Gaming, is the least fault of Soldiers. IX.  
Leudness is a thing about which no great  
Scruple is made among them. The same  
might almost be said of Injustice; it is well  
known that commonly Officers do not  
thrive, but the Soldiers pay for it. I say no-  
thing of unjust Wars, nor of the Cruelty  
and Inhumanity which often attend that  
kind of Life, because I will not enlarge up-  
on this Subject. But it is most certain,  
and every considering Person will own, that  
after the rate that military Men live almost  
every where, War is the School of Vice;  
and that the prodigious Number of those  
who follow that Employment, is one of the  
principal Causes of Corruption and De-  
bauchery.

Commerce is one of the most lawful and  
necessary Professions of Life. Not only So-  
ciety, but Religion it self may reap great  
Advantages from it. But yet this Calling  
has its Dangers and Temptations, and it is  
exercised by many in a way which is con-  
trary to good Conscience. As the only end  
of Traffick is Gain, and as the Opportuni-  
ties of getting by unlawful Methods, which  
may be practised with impunity, offer  
themselves every day; so it is evident, that  
if a Merchant has not a strict and well in-  
form'd Conscience, and Vertue enough to  
resist the perpetual Temptations to which  
his Calling exposes him, he will forfeit his  
Innocence,



**Part I.** Innocence, and violate every minute the Rules of Justice and Equity, of Charity, Truth and Honesty.

There are few Callings more innocent and more sutable to the Order which God did establish at first, than the Employments of those who exercise mechanick Trades, and get their Livelihood by bodily Labour. And yet this kind of Life proves to a great many an occasion to Vice, because they do not arm themselves against the Temptations and Sins which are ordinary in those Callings. It is almost the general Character of this Order of Men, to mind nothing but the World, to labour only for their Bodies, and to do nothing for their Souls. Hence it is, that they are ignorant, that they know their Religion very little, that they are gross, sensual, given to Intemperance, and several other Excesses. They are apt besides to be unjust and false. They make no Conscience of doing their work ill, of Lying, and detaining what is not theirs. There are a thousand petty Frauds and little knavish Tricks us'd in every Trade, which are thought Innocent and Lawful ways of Gain. Now it is plain, that all this does not contribute a little towards Corruption.

What I have said of the Employments of Life, may be apply'd to the different States Men are in, with relation to Age, Condition, and their way of Living. All these are so many occasions and circumstances which may divert them from their Duty. Thus

Thus Youth has its particular Temptations. Young People are vain, presumptuous, sensual, given to Pleasure, violent and bold in their Passions. They are likewise Imprudent and Fickle, because they want Knowledg and Experience. Being thus dispos'd at that Age, they will almost infallibly, unless prevented by a good Education, corrupt themselves, and contract ill Habits, which will stick by them as long as they live. Daily Experience shews us, that Youth ill spent is the source of the Corruption of a great many for the rest of their whole Life.

Old People are commonly covetous, morose, suspicious, wedded to the Opinions they have once embrac'd, and most deeply engag'd in their vicious Customs. Their Passions are not so boisterous, but they are more lasting and harder to be cur'd, than those of young People. And from this we may judg, that if Reason and Religion do not correct those Faults of Old People; that Age, which ought chiefly to be employ'd in preparing for Death, will prove an Obstacle to Piety and Salvation.

The Rich, as *St. Paul* observes \*, are proud and high-minded; they are apt besides to be slothful, they love to satisfy their Passions, are full of Self-love, minding themselves in every thing, and being little affected with

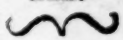
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\* 1 Tim. VI. 17.

**Part I.** the Miseries of others. So that Riches may easily spoil those who possess them, and do actually spoil many.

The Poor are almost all of them vicious, because they are Ignorant, forsaken from their Infancy, and grown up in want and idleness, and among bad Company. They have little Religion, they will live without Working, they are given to stealing and dishonesty. Envy fills their Hearts, and they only keep within the bounds of Duty, when they can do no mischief.

Those who live unconfin'd and much in the World, have for the most part little of a Christian Character. They lie open to abundance of Temptations; and what is most dangerous in that kind of Life, is, that a Man has no sooner embrac'd it, but he thinks it honourable, lawful and necessary; he hearkens no longer to the Rules of Religion, he is ashamed of them, and governs himself only by the Maxims of the World. Others lead a retir'd Life, they avoid great Companies, and they seldom appear in publick. That State may have its advantages, but it has its dangers too. Those who live thus retir'd, are apt to think themselves much better than other Men, because their Conduct seems regular and free from Scandal; and this inspires them with a secret Pride, a great Opinion of themselves, an austere and imperious Humour, which makes them apt to speak ill and to judge  
rashly

rashly of other People ; and this drives Cha- Cause  
rity, Gentleness, and Humility out of their IX.  
Hearts. 

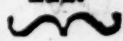
I think I have said enough to shew, that Mens various kinds of Life, have a general influence upon the irregularities of their Deportment. But to make this Truth yet more evident, I shall add two Reflections to all that has been said.

The first is, That of all the Temptations which are apt to seduce Men, none are more dangerous than those which are, 1. Necessary and unavoidable. 2. Ordinary and frequent. 3. Hidden and imperceptible. Now the Temptations arising from Mens particular Callings, have these three Characters: 1. They are necessary and unavoidable ; we may withstand them, but we cannot avoid altogether being expos'd to them. 2. They are frequent and constant, those Employments in which the greatest part of our Lives is spent, offering them to us perpetually. 3. They are hidden and imperceptible ; for besides that Men reflect little upon what is ordinary and happens every day, those Temptations are varnish'd with the specious pretences of Example and Custom, and even of the lawfulness of the Calling and of Necessity. Thus a Tradesman is necessarily expos'd to the danger of wronging his Neighbour, and of transgressing the Rules of Justice. Equity or Sincerity : The opportunity of doing this  
returns



**Part I.** returns every minute, and as often as he buys or sells: this Temptation is imperceptible, and except he has a niceness of Conscience, he will not be sensible of it, by reason that his Profession is innocent; that he is allow'd to get, and that most of the unlawful ways of Gain, are authoriz'd by Custom.

2. The second Reflection is, that the greatest and the most insuperable Obstacles to Piety, proceed for the most part, from a Man's Calling. It is that which obstructs more than any thing else, the effect of the Gospel, and Mens Conversion. We preach, we exhort to Repentance, but to whom do we speak? We speak to Men engag'd in Professions, which considering how they behave themselves in them, divert them from Piety, and furnish them with a thousand Opportunities of sinning. We speak to People who have chosen already the course of their whole Life; who resolv'd to continue in the State they are in, and to alter nothing in it; and who have form'd to themselves that Scheme of Employments, which they intend to follow at any rate. We preach to People who are no sooner out of the Church, but they meet at home, and in their ordinary business, with perpetual hindrances to Holiness, and with Temptations, which it is certain they will not withstand. Such Hearers may be preached to long enough, before they reap any fruit from what they hear. Sermons are presently gone; but the  
Temptations

Temptations arising from the Professions **Cause**  
which Men chuse, are continual, and last **IX.**  
as long as their Lives. They accompany a   
Man every where, he is not jealous of them,  
he seeks them, he gives up himself to them,  
and he fancies he may lawfully do so. This  
is the visible occasion of the Gospel's having  
so little Efficacy upon mens Minds.

I shall conclude this Chapter with two  
Remarks, which may serve for a remedy a-  
gainst the source of Corruption. 1. Every  
one ought to examine the state and kind of  
Life he is in; that if this State has something  
in it that is evil or contrary to the Duty of  
a Christian, he must alter and correct it.  
If the Profession is bad in it self, nothing  
else can be done, but to quit it. If it is  
lawful, we must take care not to render it  
dangerous or sinful, either by neglecting the  
Duties to which it obliges us, or by not  
avoiding the Snares and Temptations that  
attend it, or by making it an occasion and  
pretence to satisfy our inordinate Affections.  
I confess we may meet here with difficul-  
ties. It is hard for a Man to leave off a Pro-  
fession, to go out of his ordinary road of  
Life, and to renounce some Engagements  
when they are once form'd. And yet this  
ought and may be done, if those Engage-  
ments are not lawful. It is better we should  
offer some violence to our selves, by break-  
ing them off, or by correcting what is amiss  
in them, than to run our selves into infinite  
**Miseries.**

Part I. Miseries. But the best way is to obviate the Evil in its beginning.

Therefore, I say, 2dly. That since People use to resolve upon a Profession while they are young, that choice requires a great deal of Prudence and Caution; for no less than temporal and eternal Happiness or Misery depends upon it. But it is a sad thing to see, how rashly and inconsiderately this matter is gone about. Interest, Chance, Passion, the humour of Parents or of young People, are the things which determine so important a choice. It is not much consider'd whether a Calling is Lawful, or proper for him that embraces it; little or no care is taken to form the Inclinations of young Persons; they are given up to their own Conduct, and to all the Temptations of that Profession to which they are destin'd. And thus we need no longer wonder, why Employments are ill discharg'd, why most People lose their Innocence in them, and why there is a general Corruption to be observ'd in all States and Conditions. This is the ordinary effect and consequence of Mens particular Callings.

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*The End of the first Part.*

A  
T R E A T I S E  
Concerning the  
C A U S E S  
O F T H E  
Present Corruption  
O F  
C H R I S T I A N S,  
And the R E M E D I E S thereof.

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P A R T II.

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The Third Edition Corrected.

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L O N D O N,  
Printed in the Year, M. DCC. XI.

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T H E

# P R E F A C E.

**A** Ltho it cannot be contested, but that the Corruption of Christians proceeds from those Causes, which have been observ'd in the first Part of this Work ; yet those Causes are not the only Springs from which Corruption flows : There are others besides, which we are to discover now, and which deserve our most serious Attention.

Hitherto we have found the Causes of Corruption, in the ill Disposition of most Christians. But those which will be the subject Matter of this second Part, are of another Nature. They are more general and of a greater influence, and they may be look'd upon as the Occasions of the others. For if it be ask'd, Why Men are Ignorant, full of Prejudices, possessed with false Maxims, or negligent in the Concerns of their Salvation ; we may easily see that this proceeds chiefly from the want of Order and Discipline, from the defects of Pastors and Magistrates, from Education, and from those other Causes, which I design to enquire into at present. Things are now upon such a foot among Christians in relation to these Heads, that it is almost impossible but that the Corruption of Men must be very great ; and we must not hope to stem the

*Tide of it, unless we remove those publick and general Causes of Corruption.*

*In the next place these Causes are less known, and less observ'd than the others. I cannot tell whether it is because they are not thought of, or because no remedy is hop'd for; but Men do not appear very solicitous to remove them, nor do they seem to know them. Great endeavours are us'd in Books and Pulpits, to instruct Men, and to bring them to a more Christian Life: Matters of Religion and Morality are carefully explain'd, but this does not heal the general Disorders. The main Causes of Remisness do still subsist, and hinder the Effects of Instructions and Exhortations. It were therefore to be wish'd, that those who are concern'd for the restoring of Christianity, had larger Views, and did more diligently labour to take away the general Causes of Corruption.*

*Indeed it seems more difficult to remedy these I am now to mention, than the first. General Abuses are hardly reform'd, especially when they are confirm'd by a long Custom; and to attempt it may be thought a fruitless Labour. But all this ought not to discourage us. Truths so important as these are, ought not to be suppressed; they may produce their fruit in their Season, it is still a great matter to have set them in the best Light we can: And this is what I shall endeavour to do at present,*

A  
T R E A T I S E  
Concerning the  
C A U S E S

Of the Present Corruption of  
C H R I S T I A N S,  
And the Remedies thereof.

P A R T II.

C A U S E I.

*The present State of the Church, and of  
Religion in general.*

**P** I E T Y is always necessary, and the  
Practice of it is never impossible, to  
those who are well inclin'd. But yet  
we must confess, that the various Cir-  
cumstances of Time, Place, and of the state  
of Religion, contribute much to the progress  
of Piety or of Corruption in the World.

Q 3

There



**Part II.** There are some happy Circumstances, and some Times very favourable to Piety; as on the other hand there are unhappy Circumstances and Times in which it is like a Stranger upon Earth, the means to promote it being then neither so effectual nor so frequent. The design of this Work obliges me to consider what may be thought, in this respect, of the Time we live in; and whether this Corruption which dishonours Christianity, does not proceed from the unhappiness of the Times, and from the present State of the Church and Religion.

But we cannot succeed in this Enquiry, nor pass a sound Judgment upon the present State of Religion, without running back to its first Origin and Nature, and without taking a view of those Ages which are elapsed since its first Establishment. The Knowledge of the Scripture and of History are here of great use. The Scripture informs us what the state of Religion should be, and History shews us the different States thro which it has pass'd. When we examine Religion by these two Rules, we perceive that it neither has been, nor will be always in the State it is now in.

It is fit in the first place to seek the true Notion of the Christian Church and Religion in Scripture. There it is that Christianity still subsists in all its Beauty: for neither the Ages which are past, nor the Changes which have happen'd, have been able to tarnish in the least, the brightness of those

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native and lively Colours, in which our Sa- Cause  
viour's Religion is set forth in Holy Wri- I.  
tings. We may take notice of four princi-  
pal Characters in the Idea which the Scrip-  
ture gives us of the Christian Church and  
Religion; and these are, Truth, Holiness,  
Union, and Order.

1. The first and the chief Character of this Church and Religion, is the Knowledge and the Profession of the Truth; this is what distinguishes Christianity from false Religions. The Church is the Church of Christ no longer, than while she retains the Purity of Faith and of Evangelical Doctrine. It would be needless to prove this.

2. The sacred Writers represent the Church as a Society altogether Holy. They name her \* *The Spouse of Christ, a glorious Spouse, having neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing, but being holy and without blemish.* They call her † *The House of the living God, a holy Nation, and the Assembly of the first-born which are written in Heaven.* They give to Christians the glorious Titles of *Kings, Priests, Saints, Elect, Children of God, and New Men*; they speak of them, as of a People separated from the World and its Vices, dedicated to God and to good Works, and living in the practice of Piety, Temperance, Justice, Charity, and all other Vertues.

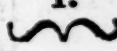
3. Union and Love is the third Character of the Church, and of the true Disciples of

\* Eph. V. 27. 1 Pet. II. † Heb. XII.

Part II. Christ. The Scripture does not speak to us of many Churches, but of one, of which all the Faithful are Members, in what place soever they may be. St. Paul says that there is but *one Faith, one Baptism, and one God*: the Apostles enjoin above all things, Union and Charity; and they give many Precepts to maintain these, and to make them flourish among Christians.

4. As Holiness and Union cannot be preserv'd, where there is no Order; so the Church was to be a well-regulated Society, in which every thing might be done in a convenient and orderly manner. And in fact, there are in the sacred Writings many Laws to this purpose. We find there several Regulations, concerning the way in which the Church ought to be govern'd, and concerning the calling of Bishops and Pastors, and the principal Functions of their Office. The Scripture does besides appoint the exercise of Discipline, the manner of proceeding in relation to scandalous Sinners, and the Administration of publick Alms. It prescribes the chief Acts of Religion and Divine Worship, Prayers, Fasting, Sacraments, Preaching, and some other Heads. All these Laws are design'd to establish Order and Piety in the Church, and to banish Confusion and Scandals out of it. And this Order cannot be a thing indifferent, since the Apostles have given us Laws about it.

It is not difficult to shew that most Christian Societies are hardly to be known by these

these Marks. But before we come to that, Cause  
it is necessary to observe the different States I.  
through which the Church has pass'd from   
her Infancy to this time.

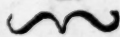
II. If we consider the Church in her Infancy, we must acknowledg, that the first Ages of Christianity were very pure, in comparison of the following. But yet we must take heed, when we speak of the purity of the Primitive Church, that we do not form to our selves too advantageous an Idea of it, as if Christianity had been then in its utmost Purity and Perfection. The Church in her beginnings did consist of Jews and Heathens. These Men embracing Christianity, did not so entirely strip themselves of their Prejudices and Customs, but that they brought with them into the Church some of the Notions of Judaism, and even of Gentilism. It is well known that this was the first occasion of those Heresies which did stain the Purity of the Christian Doctrines and Morals, and the cause of several Disorders which happen'd in the very Times of the Apostles. Besides, the Apostles and the first Ministers of the Christian Religion, were not able by reason of the Persecution and of the obstacles they met with, to regulate all things as they would have done, if the Church had been in Peace. We need not therefore wonder if we find Imperfections and Defects apparent enough, in the State of the Primitive Church. And it is of some importance, to observe this, not only



Part II. ly that we may have true apprehensions concerning this matter, but that we may besides obviate an unhappy Consequence, which might be drawn in favour of the present Corruption, from what has been known in the first Ages of Christianity. No doubt but there were Disorders and Scandals at that time; but we are to remember, that the Church was then made up of Men, who for the most part were born, and had liv'd in Paganism, and spent their Lives in the thickest darkness of Ignorance and Vice.

Yet for all that the Church was then more holy and pure than she has been since, or is at this day in most places. This is matter of fact, which cannot reasonably be contested: for, besides that it may be verified from the Testimony which the Sacred, and some of the Heathen Authors bear to the Innocency of the Primitive Christians, and that it is probable that Men were kept in awe while the Apostles were alive in the time of Miracles; besides all this, I say, there are two Considerations which prove, that Corruption could not be then so great or so general, as it is now.

These Considerations are founded upon two undeniable Facts. 1. That the Church was then persecuted. And 2. That Discipline was then exercised in it. These were two powerful means to remove Vices and Scandals from the Church. We may easily imagine, that Men who lov'd the World and their Sins, would not have embraced Christi-



Christianity at a time, when whosoever became a Christian, did by that very thing expose himself to Persecution, Torments and Death. This did fright away the greatest numbers of wicked and impious Persons. But if any of these enter'd into the Church, Discipline for the most part drove them out, when they made themselves notorious by a scandalous Life. It is easy to judg, that in such Circumstances there was more Piety at that time, than we observe now in the Church. The first Christians were sincere in their Profession. Being instructed by the Apostles, and Apostolical Men, they plac'd the Christian Religion chiefly in a good Life, to which they did solemnly engage themselves by Baptism. They were united among themselves; they govern'd themselves in matters of Order and Discipline by the Prescripts of the Apostles, as much as the Persecution gave them leave; and they did with Courage lay down their Lives for the Truth. Such was the Christianity of the first Ages.

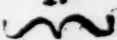
But the Church did not continue long in that State, before this Zeal of those Primitive Christians began to cool. On the one hand Persecution ceas'd, and on the other, the antient Discipline was slacken'd. These two Fences being pluckt up, and the Emperors turning Christian, the Corruption of the World broke in upon the Church. Divers abuses crept into Doctrine, Discipline, Worship and Manners, till the Church fell

at

Part II. at last into such a dismal darknes of Ignorance, Superstition and Vice, that Christianity seem'd almost quite extinct and destroy'd. All those who had any true sense of Religion, did lament this; they complain'd openly of it, and they long'd for a good Reformation. This was the state which the Church and Religion were in, for some Centuries.

It did not please God that those Times of Ignorance should last for ever; that Darknes began to be dispers'd in the last Century. Then it was that Learning and Languages reviv'd, and that the Holy Scripture, which had been for a great while a Book unknown to the People, was rescu'd out of that obscurity, in which the Barbarism of former Ages had buried it. Men did perceive that divers Errors had been introduc'd into Religion; they discover'd several Abuses, they went about to redress them; and they succeeded so far, that in this respect Christianity was restor'd to its Purity. But that great Work could not be finish'd; so that at this day the Church and Religion are not yet brought to that state of Perfection they might be in.

III. For to come now to the present state of Religion, 'tis certain, first that many Christian Churches are still very near in the same darknes Men were in some Ages ago. I shall say nothing of the sinking of Christianity in *Asia* and *Africa*; there is more Knowledge in *Europe*: but yet in many Places we may observe almost all the Disorders, which prevail'd in the Times of the grossest Ignorance.

rance. Nay, our Age is more unhappy Cause  
than the precedent, in that those Abuses I.  
have been confirm'd and authoriz'd by Laws,   
and are now supported by Force. How many  
Countries and Churches are there, where the  
People know almost nothing of the Gospel,  
where Religion is reduc'd to childish and su-  
perstitious Devotions and Practices; where  
the most ridiculous things are believ'd, and  
the most shameful Errors receiv'd; where  
the looseness of Manners may almost be paral-  
lel'd with Heathenism, where the most exe-  
crable Crimes are committed; in a word,  
where the ignorance both of the People and  
Clergy are general, excepting only a few un-  
derstanding Men, who are sensible of these  
Disorders, but are restrain'd by fear from dis-  
covering their Sentiments? From those pla-  
ces Corruption spreads to others, and 'twould  
not be difficult to shew by several instances  
that the Cause of Impiety, Ignorance and  
Vice, is to be found in those Places which  
should be the Fountains of Piety and Reli-  
gion.

What I have now said, is not to be applied  
to all Churches; for some there are, where  
Religion is not so corrupted, and where a  
purer Christianity is profess'd. But yet let  
us inquire in the second place, whether there  
are any Christian Societies, where nothing is  
wanting or to be desir'd in the state of the  
Church and Religion, and where it would  
not be necessary to make some Alterations  
and Constitutions, in order to come nearer

to



**Part II.** to Perfection. This deserves to be examin'd with Care, and without Prepossession. We ought here to lay aside the Spirit of a Party, and ingenuously to acknowledg defects where they are. For else if every one is wedded to the Society of which he is a Member nothing can ever be remedied. For supposing there are Defects, what remedy can be us'd, if we are all possess'd with this Prejudice, that all is perfect in our Society? Is not this the way to canonize Abuses, and to prevent the restoring of Order?

And first, We ought not to wonder, if there should still be Imperfections in the purest Societies. It would be a kind of Miracle, if there were none remaining. God does not always think fit to finish his Work at once; unless he had made use of inspir'd Men, such as the Prophets or the Apostles were. It was impossible so to attain Perfection, and to provide for every thing at first dash, that nothing more should be desir'd. Besides, Circumstances are so much alter'd, that it seems necessary to change several things that were left in the last Age. It is further to be consider'd, that tho Christians did long for a good Reformation, yet great difficulties were to be overcome to bring it about. Mens Minds were not much enlighten'd, they were just creeping out of darkness, and a long Custom had almost obliterated the true Ideas of Religion. Almost all those who were in Civil or Ecclesiastical Authority, did obstinately defend the Abuses which all good Men thought it necessary to redress. Extream severity was us'd

us'd towards those who desir'd this Reformation of the Church. All this did terrify a great many well-meaning Persons, and was the cause, that in several Places, such as had Courage enough to condemn the Abuses openly, were not able for want of Means to do all that the Interest of Religion requir'd. They were fain in those Places to yield something to the Iniquity of the Times, and to settle things as well as they could, till a more favourable Opportunity. Some Churches came nearer to Perfection than others. But howsoever, if we would pass a right Judgment upon the present State of the Church and Religion, we ought to examine the thing in it self, and without partiality. Upon this I shall offer here some general Considerations, and refer to the following Chapters some Heads, which will require an exact and particular Discussion. I will first resume the four Characters, which the Scripture gives us of the Christian Church and Religion; which are Truth, Holiness, Union, and Order.

1. All Christian Societies boast that they profess the Truth; and that very thing is enough to shew that many of them are in Error, since they do not agree among themselves about the Articles to be believ'd. I will not enlarge on this Head, because it would lead me into many Particulars, and in some respect into Controversy. I shall only say, that if we did judg of what is to be believ'd in Religion, by that which ought to be the Principle and Rule of Faith among Christians, I mean the Holy Scripture, we should soon per-

**Part II.** perceive on which side the Truth lies. We might observe in that Society which vaunts it self to be the purest of all, and even which pretends to be infallible, and the only true Church exclusive of all others, absurd Tenets and monstrous Doctrines, equally repugnant to Scripture and Reason : and we should be convinc'd that the Doctrine of those Churches which did separate from that Society, is much more consonant to the Gospel.

2. We must have a very mean Notion of Christianity, if we can believe that Holiness, which is the second Character of the Church, is to be found among Christians at this time. The complaint of the last Ages was, that Religion wanted to be reform'd in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Manners. It was reform'd in part by the rejecting of those Errors and Abuses, which were crept into Doctrine, Worship and Discipline ; but the Reformation of Manners is still behind. The People have not as yet been reform'd in this regard, except perhaps in those Times and Places where they have been persecuted. As for the rest, they have scarce changed any thing besides their Belief and Worship ; this alone proves that the State of the Church is yet imperfect. Holiness is the Scope of Religion, it is the chief Character of Christianity ; so that where Holiness and Purity of Manners is not, Religion must be very defective.

3. Union, Peace and Charity, as was said before, are one of the essential Marks of the Disci-

Disciples and Church of Christ. But where Cause  
is this Character to be found? The Church I.

We cannot say, that there is but one Church; we must say, that there are many Religions and Churches. Christians divide not only upon lawful Grounds, which make Separation necessary, but about things of small consequence. Upon the least Diversity of Opinions, they pronounce *Anathema* against one another, form different Sects and Communions; even those Churches which might have a common Belief and Interest, are not united. Those Men, who by their Office should be the Ministers of Peace, are but too often the Firebrands of Division. I desire no other Proof of this but that Zeal which most Divines express about the Disputes of Religion, and that little Disposition which is found among them, to sacrifice some Opinions, or Expressions, to the Peace of the Church.

I do not condemn all Disputes without distinction, for some are necessary. The Apostles command the Rulers of the Church to establish, with Care, pure Doctrine, and to confute those who endeavour to corrupt it. They did themselves, on many Occasions, dispute against false Teachers. To desert the Truth when attack'd, were to make but little account of it: This would be a betraying the Interest of Piety, since Piety is always founded upon Truth. Disputes become necessary, when essential Truths are to be defended.

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Neither



**Part II.** Neither would I reduce all profitable or lawful Disputes to those only which concern Fundamentals. There are Errors, which tho not mortal, yet are dangerous, and so it is needful to oppose them: And there are Truths, which tho not fundamental, are yet of great use in Religion, and may serve to confirm the Principles of Christianity. It is fit that such Truths should be discuss'd, provided this be done with Moderation and Honesty.

I only blame useles Disputes, or such, which tho they may have their use, yet are accompany'd with those Passions and Disorders which blind Zeal inspires. Such Controversies, which are but too common, are extreamly fatal to Religion. We are not able to express what Mischiefs they occasion in the Church, and how prejudicial they are to the Progress of Christianity in general, and of Piety in particular. It may seem at first, that because the People do not take cognizance of these Contests, they should prove hurtful only to those learned Men by whom alone they are managed; but yet the whole Church feels the ill Effects of them.

1. By reason of these Disputes the People are destitute of Edification, or at least they do not receive all the Edification which is necessary. Church-men, being only full of these, study and meditate upon nothing else; in their Sermons they speak only of these Matters, which take them up, and which

seem capital to them. They have neither Leisure nor Inclination to mind things of another nature, and to set about reforming the Manners of Christians; or they do it but faintly and carelessly. Whilst a Minister is very busy in his Study, or Pulpit, about confuting an Adversary whom he never saw, or an Error which is unknown to his whole Flock, his Sheep are lost; his Hearers remain possess'd with mortal Errors concerning Morality, and engag'd in the most vicious Habits. This is the Fruit of most Disputes, they occasion the Ruin rather than the Edification of the Hearers.

2. Disputes keep up among Christians false Zeal, Hypocrisy and Licentiousness. The People learn, by the Example of their Teachers, to place their Zeal, not in opposing Vice, but in understanding Controversy, in adhering to certain Opinions, and in bearing a strong Hatred to those who dissent from them. They judge that what makes the ordinary Employment of Divines, what they insist most upon, what kindles their Zeal, and excites in them the most violent Passions, must needs be the most important thing in Religion.

3. Sometimes the People take part in the Quarrels of their Teachers, from whence proceed unavoidable Animosities and Divisions, which extinguish Love and the Spirit of Christianity, and which create insuperable Obstacles to the Peace of the Church, and the Reunion of Christians: Of this we have too many Instances.

Part II.

4. Lastly, The little Union which is in the Church is one of the great Causes of the small Progress of Christianity. Christians, instead of making their Religion appear lovely and venerable to Jews and Infidels, expose it to their Contempt; instead of endeavouring to propagate the Christian Faith, and to destroy Idolatry, they turn their own Weapons against themselves; they mind nothing but the promoting the Interest of their particular Sects, and they neglect that of Christianity in general. On the other hand, Unbelievers, seeing that Christians are not agreed among themselves, take occasion from thence to question every thing; and they judg that there can be nothing but Uncertainty and Obscurity in a Religion, where there is nothing but Controversy and different Opinions.

The want of Union is then a most considerable Imperfection in the present State of the Church. It were to be wish'd that some Remedy might be apply'd to so great an Evil, and that those Controversies which produce and cherish it might be turn'd out of doors. The way to compass this would be to endeavour, in good earnest, the reforming of Manners, and the restoring of Order. This great and noble Design will no sooner be pursu'd, but Men will be ashamed of all these Contentions; they will look upon them as trifling Amusements, and find no relish in those Disputes, which, to say the truth, do only employ such Persons

sons as are conceited with vain Learning, Cause  
and narrow-spirited Men, who are not ca- I.  
pable of larger and higher Views. ~~~~~

IV. If we examine the present State of the Church with relation to Order, there we must ingenuously confess, that great Defects are to be found. In matters of Order, and Discipline, Christians ought to regulate themselves, First by the Laws which Christ and his Apostles have set them, and then by the Example of the Primitive Church, and of the purest Antiquity; it being evident, that what has been practis'd in the first Ages of Christianity, and does besides agree with the Rules and the Spirit of the Gospel, should have a great regard paid to it by all Christians. Now it cannot be deny'd, but that most Churches have considerably departed from that antient Order.

To prove this by some Instances; it is certain, in fact, that the Ecclesiastical Order and Government, which obtains in many Places, is not such as it ought to be. None can be ignorant of this but those who are altogether unacquainted with Antiquity, or, who being full of Prejudices, find what they please in Scripture and Church-History. Can it be said, that the Elections of Bishops or Pastors are Canonical, as they are managed in many Places, and that the Practice and Order establish'd by the Apostles and the Primitive Christians are observ'd every where? It is certain likewise, that all Churches are not furnish'd with a sufficient



**Part II.** *Number of Persons to perform Divine Service, and to instruct and edify the People.*  
 When we look back upon the Primitive Church, we find, that tho it was poor and persecuted, yet it had its Bishops, its Priests, its Catechists, and its Widows. At this time we see yet in several Places, that one single Town maintains a great Number of Church-Men, who indeed, for the most part, are very insignificant; but elsewhere it is quite otherwise, one single Man does often perform all the Ecclesiastical Functions; nay, sometimes many Churches have but one Pastor. This Disorder, as well as many others, proceeds partly from the want of necessary Means and Funds to supply the Occasions of all Churches. Here it might be proper to speak of the Pastoral Functions, and of the Administration of Discipline; but these two Heads being important, I reserve what I have to say about them for the two next Chapters.

We ought here not to omit the want of Union and Correspondence among Churches. If they had more Communication and Inter-course one with another, great Advantages would follow from thence. Right Measures might be taken for the Edification of the People, and for the redressing of Abuses and Scandals, that Uniformity, which is so necessary both in Worship and in Church-Government and Discipline, might be establish'd; and that would contribute much to the Honour and Safety of Religion in general.

neral. The Church would appear then Cause  
like a well-order'd Society, and like One I.  
Body, of which all the Parts should main-  
tain a relation to, and a strict dependence  
upon one another. On the other hand, it  
is a great Unhappiness when Churches have  
little or no Intercourse or Communication  
one with another, so that every one orders  
its Matters and Customs, the Form of its  
Worship and Government, within it self.

Thus, in many respects, it would be easy  
to shew, that Things are not altogether re-  
gulated in the Church as they ought to be,  
with relation to Order. Men are not sensible  
of these Defects, because they are apt to judg  
of Religious Matters by the Practice of the  
present Time, and by the Customs of their  
respective Countries; besides, that Antiquity  
is but little known: And yet these Defects  
contribute more than is commonly imagin'd  
to the decay of Piety and Zeal. The want of  
Order in any Society does most certainly  
bring Confusion and Licentiousness into it.

V. The Worship of God being the end and  
the essence of Religion, we cannot but inquire  
whether all things are well regulated with  
relation to that. To speak here only of the  
publick Worship, it would be very necessary  
that it should be perform'd every where in  
such a manner, that the People might under-  
stand the most essential Parts of Religion  
and Divine Worship, to be Adoration, Praise,  
and the Invocation of God; and that the dis-  
charging of these Duties is the end of publick

**Part II. Assemblies.** I remark this particularly, because, in many places, Devotion is plac'd only in the hearing of Sermons. Churches are properly nothing else but Auditories. People fancy that Sermons are the chief thing they meet for, and that Preaching is the principal Function to be exercis'd by Ministers in the Church; the Prayers and the Psalms are look'd upon only as Preliminaries or Circumstances to a Sermon. This is a dangerous Notion, because on the one hand it makes Christians neglect Divine Service, and on the other it renders Religion contemptible, when Sermons are not so edifying as they should be, which happens but too often. And therefore it would not perhaps be amiss, if, as it is practis'd in several Churches, Divine Service was distinguish'd from Sermons by some Circumstances of Times or Persons; so that it might be one thing to celebrate Divine Service, and another to hear Sermons.

Several Reflections might be offer'd here concerning the principal things relating to Publick Worship; such as Forms of Prayers, Liturgies, the manner of praising God, and Sacred Hymns. It would be a Question worth the examining, whether we ought, in Christian Churches, to use only Psalms and Canticles out of the Old Testament; among which, tho some are most edifying and full of excellent Expressions of Piety yet there are many which relate altogether to some particular Passages of those Times;

or

or if they speak of Christ, 'tis only in a Pro-Cause.  
phetical Stile, very obscure to the People. I.

One would think that Christian Hymns, which should be sung to the Honour of God and Jesus Christ, chiefly to celebrate the Wonders of our Redemption, might be extraordinary useful to nourish Piety, and to stir up Devotion, as well as more agreeable to that which the Apostles prescribe, and which the Primitive Christians practis'd in their Assemblies. Would it not likewise be necessary to agree about giving the Holy Sacrament to sick and dying Persons, and to restore the more frequent use of the Eucharist, according to the Practice of the Apostles and of the Primitive Church? Fasting being enjoin'd by our Saviour, and establish'd by the Example of the Apostles, and by the universal Practice of the first Christians, and of all the Churches in the World for several Ages; there is reason to wonder that in some places this Duty should be almost out of date: For as to solemn Fasts, which are celebrated from time to time, and seldom enough, those are not properly the Fasts of which the Gospel speaks, and which were observ'd by the Antients: They are Acts of publick Humiliation, design'd for times of Calamity, or of extraordinary Devotion; and the use of these ought not to be too frequent, because Custom is apt to lessen their effect. But I mean those Fasts which are Helps to Devotion and Holiness, and Means to mortify the Body, and to dispose Men to Humiliation and Repentance. Uni-



**Part II.** Uniformity in Divine Worship would be another very necessary Establishment. It would shew the Unity of Faith; it would render Religion venerable, and prevent those Disorders and Confusions, which are inevitable, when Rites and Practices quite different, nay sometimes contrary to one another, are observ'd in several Churches.

Lastly, Care should be taken that Divine Service might be perform'd every where in an orderly, grave and decent manner. The Exterior of Religion has a greater influence, than we imagine, upon the Essence of it; besides that we have an express Law, \* which says, *That all things should be done decently and in order.* Indeed Pageantry and Pomp, the great Number of Ceremonies, and whatever favours of Superstition, ought to be avoided, as well as every thing which is contrary to the Essence of Evangelical Worship; and it were better to fall into an excess of Simplicity, than to clog Religion with too many Ceremonies. But yet under pretence of Simplicity, we are not to run into Confusion, and to neglect the Externals of Religion and Divine Service. If we should examine by this Rule what is done in some Churches, with relation, for instance, to the Laws and Forms of publick Assemblies, to the Celebration of Divine Worship and the Sacraments, and to the Persons who receive the Communion, and

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\* 1 Cor. XIV. 40.

who officiate, we might find there several Cause  
things to be rectify'd. And it would be very I.  
useful to take this into consideration; for the want of Gravity and Decency, and a dry and careless performing of publick Worship, render Religion despicable, and make the People, who commonly judg of things by their outsides, to entertain a mean notion of Divine Service; which produces the contempt of Religion, and by consequence ill Manners.

VI. This Contempt of Religion is another Fault, which ought not to be pass'd over in silence. It has been always the general sense of Mankind, that Religion is to be honour'd and respected. The Heathen Religions, as false as they were, did attract the Veneration of the People; and the same may be seen at this day among the several Nations of Infidels. Certainly then the Christian Religion deserves all the Veneration and Respect which Men are capable of. But it must be confess'd, that, in many places, it is falling of late into a very great outward meanness. Men are accustoming themselves to look with Indifference, with Haughtiness and Scorn upon every thing which has any relation to the Church, or to Religion. This appears especially in the contempt which is express'd towards the Clergy: tho the Scripture represents their Office as a most excellent and honourable Employment; tho it enjoins Christians, to \* honour, love and reverence those who

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\* Heb. XIII. 17. 1 Thess. V. 13.

**Part II.**  have the rule over them; yet the Ecclesiastical Order is generally but little honour'd: And what is more surprizing, it is most depressed and abased, in those Churches which otherwise profess a purer Doctrine and Worship, than other Christian Societies. I do not speak of all Churches in general; but whoever sees what is practis'd in many places, would be apt to think, that it was a part of the Reformation of the Church, to strip the Clergy of all Ecclesiastical Authority, and of every thing that might render them venerable to the People, and to set them on a low and contemptible Foot. Their Character is become Abject, if not Odious, and it becomes so more and more every Day. That which makes it more despicable, is the Poverty which many of them are forc'd to live in.

It is not difficult to find out the Grounds of this Contempt. It may be justly charg'd on the Clergy themselves: their Character is become vile, because they expose it; but it does not follow that Men have a Right to despise them; all that is to be done, is to endeavour the reclaiming of them. If under pretence of Persons being unworthy, or of some abuse in Offices, it was lawful to despise the Professions themselves, would not even Magistracy be often the vilest of all Employments? May we not say also, that Churchmen do not well maintain their Character, because they are despis'd? An Office which is slighted will never be well discharg'd; it  
is

is seldom that great worth is to be found in a Post which is little honour'd, or rather much despis'd.

Cause  
I.

The chief Cause of this Contempt was the manner in which things were order'd in the last Century. Persecution, Poverty, and the Opposition of the higher Powers were at first great Obstacles to the establishing of good Order. Princes and great Men did possess themselves of the Revenues and Authority of the Church. Nothing was left to Churchmen but the care of making Sermons, and of administering the Sacraments. They were turn'd into bare Preachers; a Character which for the most part is not very fit to create Respect. I say nothing here of the Discipline and Government of the Church, because I am to speak of these more largely by and by.

This Abasement of Religion, and of the Ministry, is a visible Cause of Corruption. As soon as Sacred things are disregarded, Impiety must needs prevail; especially if the Ministers of Religion are despis'd, then Religion can have no great force upon mens Minds. The Master cannot be honour'd, when his Servants are slighted. Men, who are without Authority, cannot keep the People in their Duty. Whatsoever comes from an abject Person, who is neither belov'd nor esteem'd, can never be receiv'd with Submission. The contempt of Pastors draws of necessity after it the contempt of Divine Service, of Preaching, and of other Sacred Functions.

The



Part II.

less fatal to the Church, than the immense and excessive Riches which did formerly corrupt the Clergy. For besides that in those times and places in which the Christian Religion is predominant, and profess'd by Persons of Quality, Poverty makes the Ministers of Religion contemptible to the People, and even to great Men; it being certain that, in those Circumstances, it is necessary that Ministers should live with some Credit: besides this, I say, that Poverty disables them from exercising Hospitality, from minding their Function as they ought, and from discharging the Duties of it with Authority and Zeal; it forces them to have recourse to several mean or unlawful Methods to supply their Necessities, and those of their Families, and to do many things which do not comport with their Employment. From thence proceeds likewise the want of able Ministers. A great many Persons who might have the necessary Talents, Qualifications and Means to be very useful in the Church, take a disgust at that Profession, by the fear of Contempt or Poverty: As long as things are in this State, Religion will be despis'd, and Corruption will still be in vogue.

It is not so easy to remove this Cause of Corruption as it is to detect it. The re-establishing of Order seems to be a thing extremely difficult. To this end it would be requisite that Princes and Church-men should

should act in conjunction; but there are Cause  
few Christian Princes who lay this to heart, I.  
and Divines have quite other things in ~~~~~  
their thoughts: Their great Business is to  
maintain what is establish'd, and to dispute  
with those who find fault with it. On the  
other hand, Knowledg or Resolution is  
wanting, and there is not enough of Hone-  
sty or greatness of Soul to confess the Truth.  
Few Writers have the Courage to speak so  
impartially, as the famous Author of *the*  
*History of the Reformation in England* has  
done, in the Preface to his Second Volume.  
It is thought, by many Persons, that all  
would be ruin'd if the least Alteration was  
made. Some of those Defects, which have  
been mention'd in this Chapter, are now  
become inviolable Customs and Laws. E-  
very body fancies true and pure Christianity  
to be that which obtains in his Country, or  
in the Society he lives in; and it is not so  
much as put to the question, whether or not  
some things should be alter'd. As long as  
Christians are possess'd with these Prejudi-  
ces, we must not expect to see Christianity  
restor'd to an entire Purity.

But yet it is to be hop'd from the Grace of  
God, and the force of Truth, that Christians  
will open their Eyes at last, and that Divines  
will grow sensible of the necessity of minding  
these things. The main Point here is to  
shake off all Prejudice, and to consider things  
in their Nature and Original. Our Saviour  
has left us an excellent Rule, when speaking  
of

Part II. of the Abuses which had been so long received among the Jews, in reference to Marriage, he tells us, \* *That from the beginning it was not so.* This Maxim is of great use, and a Lover of Truth and Vertue should always have it before his eyes. It were to be wish'd that we should still appeal to it, and that instead of governing our selves by the Custom of the present Time, we should run up to the antient Constitution, and compare what is done at this day with that which has been, and ought to be done. This would be the true way to reform Abuses, and to draw near to Perfection, and to bring things back into the natural and primitive Channel.

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## CAUSE II.

### *The want of Discipline.*

**I**T is not my Design in this Chapter to speak of Church-Discipline in general; I shall only insist upon that Part of it, the End of which is to regulate the Manners of Christians: And this is an important matter. The want of Discipline is one of the greatest Imperfections which have been observ'd in the present State of the Church, and one of the most evident and general Causes of the Corruption of Christians. But because some have pretended that Discipline, such as I sup-

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† Mat. XIX.

pose it in this Chapter, was a human and arbitrary Institution, the observation of which was not absolutely necessary, and might be dangerous; I think it proper to say something here concerning the original and the necessity of the Discipline of the Church.

I.

It is certain in the first place, that all Societies and Bodies, have a right to establish an Order to regulate themselves by, and to provide for their Security and Preservation. When several Men or People unite to form a Body, they have Power to make Laws and Regulations, to which all the Members of that Body may be tied; and to exclude those from their Communion, who will not submit to them. But these Laws ought not to clash with other Laws already establish'd, nor with just and acknowledg'd Rights. I think, this Power which is granted to the meanest of Societies, cannot be denied to the Church; and this proves already that the Church had a right to appoint a Discipline, to which all her Members should be subject, provided that Discipline did not on the one hand prejudice publick Tranquillity, and the Authority of the Magistrates; nor any ways contradict on the other hand the Laws of the Gospel. Now as Discipline is not liable to either of these inconveniencies, but do's rather perfectly agree with the welfare of civil Society, and the Spirit of the Christian Religion, as will be prov'd hereafter; so the establishing of it, seems to be equally lawful and necessary.

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II. But



Part II. II. But further, Discipline is an Order which has God for its Author. We find the Institution of it in Holy Scripture, and in the Laws of Christ, and of his Apostles; I shall recite the chief of these.

1. In St. Matthew's Gospel, Chap. XVIII. 15, 16, 17. we read these Words: *If thy Brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every word may be establish'd. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen Man and a Publican.* For the right understanding of these Words, we must know that our Saviour does not enact here a new Law, and that an Order like that which is here prescrib'd, was already observ'd among the Jews. But here, as upon many Occasions, our Saviour did comply with the Customs and Practice of that Nation, because he judg'd that those Customs were good, and fit for his views and purposes. The first Christians did the same in matter of Order and Government, they did form the Christian Church upon the Model of the Jewish Assemblies, and upon the Method which was there observ'd.

This is the Key of the Place I have now quoted. Our Saviour approves the Jewish Practice, and enjoins his Disciples to observe the same Order amongst them. It

cannot

cannot be doubted but that this was his Cause meaning. For he speaks to his Disciples, II.

and it appears by all the circumstances of this Passage, and by the sequel of his Discourse, that he is giving here a Law, which concerns the Christian Church. It is true indeed, that he properly speaks of private Difference; but what he says ought to be applied to all those Disorders, which may happen in the Church, and particularly to Scandals. And surely it is evident, that if we may proceed in the Methods here enjoined, when the Case is only concerning some differences between private Men, we have much more right to do so with relation to publick Sins, since they are Cases which concern the whole Church, and that directly, and which do yet more properly belong to her Cognisance, than the quarrels of private Men. The meaning of Christ is then, that there must be an Order in his Church for the removing of Scandals. He supposes that the Church has a Right to interpose upon those Occasions; and he commands that those who shall refuse to hear the Church, be look'd upon as if they were her Members no longer, and that Communication with them should be avoided: This is the import of these words, *Let him be unto thee as a Heathen Man and a Publican.*

2. The V. Chapter of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, ver. 2, 3, 4. decides this Matter. St. Paul having been inform'd, that there was a Man among the *Corinthians*,

Part II. who liv'd in Incest, he writes about it to that Church; and first he reproves them, *for not having cut off from their Communion, the Person who had committed so infamous an Action.* In the next place he does himself excommunicate that Man, and deliver him up to Satan. I know that perhaps this Power of delivering up to Satan belonged only to the Apostles; and it is likely, that this was one of those extraordinary Punishments which they had a Power to inflict upon profane and rebellious Persons. But as for Excommunication, it is the common and ordinary right of the Church. This Right, or rather this Duty of the Church, is clearly asserted by the Censure which the Apostle addresses to the *Corinthians*, because *they had not taken that incestuous Person from among them*, and because they had not observ'd the Order he had given them before, *not to suffer Fornicators; \* I wrote unto you already not to company with Fornicators.* He repeats this Order in these Words, which contain an expresse and general Law against all scandalous Sinners: *† I write it unto you again, not to keep company; if any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.* This is positive: and what the Apostle adds, *Do not ye judg them that are within?* is a Confirmation that the Church has a Right to do so, with relation to her Members. Lastly

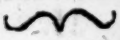
\* Ver. 9. † Ver. 11.

he concludes with these Words, \* *Therefore Cause put away from among your selves that wicked Person*; for thus this Verse is to be render'd, as II. the drift of the whole Chapter, of which this is the Conclusion, shews it evidently. I desire the force of this Proof may be consider'd. It is not one single Passage which I here produce, it is a whole Chapter, it is a Thread of Arguments, and of exprefs and reiterated Injunctions. St. Paul describes those whom the Church ought not to suffer in her Bosom, he appoints what is to be done in reference to them; which is, that they ought to be cut off from the Body of Christians, and that their Company is to be avoided. There cannot be a clear and exprefs Law, if this is not so.

3. There are some other Places which have no ambiguity in them, 2 *Thess.* III. 6. *We command you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* this Preface is remarkable; here is a Law in due Form, which the Apostle is going to deliver, he proposes it by way of Command, and he interposes the Authority of our Lord Jesus Christ; *We command you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us.* This Law is repeated, v. 14. *If any Man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

4. The 1st Epistle to Timothy affords us Proofs unanswerable. The design of St. Paul in



Part II.  this Epistle is to establish Order and Discipline in the Church. To this purpose he gives several Precepts to *Timothy*; he instructs him exactly how Pastors ought to proceed about Information, Censures, and the principal Offices of Church-Government: \* *Rebuke not an Elder, but instruct him as a Father, and the younger Men as Brethren; the elder Women as Mothers, the younger as Sisters, with all Purity,* † *Against an Elder (or a Priest) receive not an accusation but before two or three Witnesses: Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.* I might add other Places out of this Epistle and the following, and out of that to *Titus*. Here is then again, a whole thread of Discourse, prescribing the Order according to which the Church is to be govern'd. Here are particular Rules; and *St. Paul* uses an Adjuration to oblige *Timothy* to observe them. These Laws do not concern *Timothy* in particular, but *St. Paul* speaks here of the Episcopal Function, and of the Duty of the Pastors of the Church in general. We need but read the Epistles to *Timothy*, and the beginning of that which he writes to *Titus*, to be satisfy'd that he intends that this Order should be settled in all the Churches.

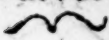
Either there is nothing plain in Scripture, or it appears from all these Places, that Dis-

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\* Chap. V. † 1 Tim. V. 1, 2, 19, 20, 21, || Tit. III. 10.  
discipline

cipline is instituted of God; that the exercise of it is committed to Pastors; that scandalous Sinners are not to be tolerated in the Church; that private Men ought to avoid their Company; and that the Governours of the Church are bound to proceed against them, by private and publick Censures, and even by Excommunication. If the Passages I have cited do not prove all this, we may wrangle about every thing, and all Arguments from the sacred Writings may be eluded. The Institution of the Sacraments is not more expresse or positive.

III. But tho these Places were not so positive and so clear as they are, yet we may be assur'd, that this is their true meaning, because this is the sense in which the whole Primitive Church understood them. The practice of the first Ages, in conjunction with the Laws of Christ and of his Apostles, amounts to a Demonstration, which cannot be withstood; besides that we are to presume, that what has been practis'd from the Foundation of the Church, and in the time of her Purity, was settled by the Apostles themselves, or by Apostolical Men, so that we ought as much as possibly to conform our selves to it. Now we know that Discipline was observ'd in the Primitive Church, notwithstanding the unhappiness of the Times, and the Persecution. This is unquestionable matter of Fact, and therefore I shall take it for granted; and only say in short, that then all those who embrac'd Christianity

Part II.  stianity were engag'd by a solemn Vow to renounce the Vices of the Age, and to lead a holy Life; that those who were baptiz'd were not suffer'd to live disorderly; that vicious Persons were debar'd the holy Mysteries; that those who fell into great Sins were excommunicated, as well as those who were Contumacious and Incorrigible; that such were not restor'd to the Peace of the Church, but after various degrees of Penance, and a publick acknowledgment of their Faults; and that as to those who relaps'd, they were received only at the hour of Death. Very clear Monuments of this Practice are still extant, in the Writings of the antient Doctors of the Church, as well as in the old Canons and Decrees of Councils. This Discipline must needs have been very severely observ'd, since St. *Ambrose* was not afraid to put it in practice against the Emperor *Theodosius*.

I am not ignorant, that the Primitive Church has varied about certain Circumstances, that the Penitents were treated sometimes with more and sometimes with less severity, and that the time of their Penance was longer or shorter: But as to the main or the essence of Discipline, it did always obtain in the Primitive Church. And it was as little question'd then, whether Discipline ought to be observ'd, as whether Christians should be baptiz'd. This usage among the first Christians is at least a strong presumption in favour of Discipline; but it being consonant

sonant besides to what we read in the New Testament, I do not see how there can remain any doubt about this matter.

Cause  
II.

IV. In the last place, the Nature of Discipline it self proves the usefulness and necessity of it. All those who are not blinded with Prejudice, must own, that Discipline consider'd in it self, is altogether agreeable to the Spirit of Christianity. 1. The honour of Religion, and the promoting of Christ's Kingdom, require Order in the Church. Who does not see but that if the Church did tolerate scandalous Persons, and take them into her Bosom, and make no difference between them and the Faithful; she might justly be charg'd with all the Disorders and Scandals observ'd in the Lives of bad Christians, and be look'd upon by Infidels, as a profane Society, where Vice is permitted? But the exercise of Discipline is an authentick disowning of Vice, whereby the Church declares publicly that she does not allow of it.


2. Discipline is a most efficacious means to procure the Conversion of Sinners. A Man must be very much harden'd, when the being remov'd from the Communion of Christians, does not reclaim him. But when a scandalous Person is suffer'd to live in the Society of the Faithful, when he is admitted to the same Privileges with other Members of the Church, this gives him an occasion to harden himself in Sin, and to think that he is as good a Christian, and that he has as much Right to Salvation as others: which  
is



**Part II.** is a most dangerous, but withal a most common Imagination.

3. Discipline is useful to the Church in general. Many who may otherwise have ill Inclinations, are restrain'd by Example, or Shame, or Fear, or even by Conscience: Good Men are thereby doubly edified; since on the one hand this Rigour confirms them in their Duty, and that on the other hand, it makes reparation for the Scandal which other Mens Sins give them.

From all this, I conclude, that Discipline is a sacred, necessary and inviolable Order. It cannot be said, that it is a human or arbitrary Establishment, which may be alter'd, or which was only to continue for a time. An Order which has its Original in the express Laws of Christ and his Apostles, and is appointed in Scripture as a general Law; an Order which has been observ'd in the Primitive and Apostolical Church; an Order which is founded on the very nature of the Church and Religion, and which perfectly agrees with the Spirit of the Gospel; such an Order certainly ought to be follow'd, as being of a necessary and indispensable Obligation. I say it again, there is nothing more positive than this in the Institution of the Sacraments: Discipline as well as the Sacraments, is founded upon divine Institution, and confirm'd by the practice of the Primitive Church. But in Discipline there is one thing more than in the Sacraments: for whereas the Sacraments consider'd in themselves,

selves, and without respect to the divine Cause Institutions, are things indifferent and of no use; Discipline in it self is just and useful, agreeable to the Principles of Christianity, as well as to plain Reason and Sense. II. 

I have perhaps been too large upon this Subject, but it was to be prov'd in the first place that Discipline is necessary and instituted by God, since that is the ground I go upon in this whole Chapter.

This sacred Order which had been settled in the beginning of Christianity, was alter'd in process of time; and in this, as in many other things, Christians grew remiss. This was done by degrees; for good Laws are not commonly abolish'd all at once, but through insensible changes. We learn from Ecclesiastical History, that the slackning of Discipline is chiefly to be imputed to the taking away some publick Penances. Those Penances were converted into private Confessions and Penances. At first this alteration was only concerning some Sins, which were not thought to deserve the utmost rigor of Discipline; for as to great Sins, such as Murder and Adultery, the antient Order was still in force. But at last about the end of the IV Century publick Penances were abolish'd, first in the Eastern, and sometime after in the Western Churches. Instead of Penances, private Satisfactions were appointed; and then Men unhappily began to be more concern'd about the exterior of Penance, than about what is spiritual in it, and fit to reclaim

**Part II.** claim Sinners. This was done at first by a kind of Relaxation or Indulgence; but that which at the beginning was no more than an exception to the Law, succeeded in the room of the Law it self: and from thence sprang Indulgences, Satisfactions, Penance, auricular Confession, and many other Practices, which are but Corruptions of the antient Discipline. The Bishops on the other hand being distracted by temporal Cares, after the Conversion of the Emperors to the Christian Religion, began to neglect the essential parts of their Function, and the Conduct of their Flocks. They were for humouring great Men, who thought it hard to submit to the publick Order. This is a short account, how the purity of the Christian Religion was considerably adulterated in the point of Discipline.

**III.** We are now to examine what the present State of the Church and Religion is, with relation to Discipline. All the Abuses which came up in the room of the antient Discipline, do still subsist in most places, both in the Greek and in the Latin Church. The Canons and Laws of the Church in the first Centuries have been abrogated by contrary Laws and Canons. This is acknowledg'd by all Men of Learning and Sincerity.

Let us see then whether this Discipline is to be found any where else. There are many Churches in the last Age, which did redress those Abuses I now mention'd. But they ought to have gone further; as these Abuses

Abuses had succeeded in the room of Apostolical Discipline, so that too should have been restor'd when these were taken away. But this was not done as it might have been wished. The Disorder was remov'd, but Order was not re-establish'd ; and it is not hard to apprehend how this came to pass.

It is no wonder that those Abuses should be taken away ; they were grown too intolerable ; and they could not hold out against the Learning of an Age more knowing than the former were. Things were gone so far, that a Turn and a Revolution were necessary. It is very probable besides, that Interest, Pride, or Ambition, did move great numbers of Persons, who after all had not much Piety, to set themselves against those many and great Disorders, and to shake off a Yoke under which the Christian World then groan'd. But the same Principles hindred their submitting to the Yoke of Christ, and binding themselves to the observation of Evangelical Discipline. We are to consider further, that the Rules of Discipline and Penance had been disus'd for several hundred Years, so that it was not easy to bring the World to submit to an Order, of which the Notion was lost. Policy had perhaps a large share likewise in this Revolution. Princes and great Men were easily determin'd, to pull down the excessive and usurped Authority of the Clergy ; but they did not at all express the same Zeal to restore to the Church her lawful Authority. In fine, among



Part II. mong Divines themselves, there were many who could not endure that Discipline should be nam'd, and who disputed and writ against those who were for excluding scandalous Persons from the Holy Sacrament, and for making use of Excommunication and publick Penances. In such Circumstances the restoring of Discipline was a hard Task. It will not be improper to relate here concerning this matter, the Opinions and the very Words of those who were then imploy'd about the Reformation of the Church.

They look'd upon Discipline as a Capital Point to restore Religion to its Purity. They wrote, \* *That Discipline was the best, nay the ONLY MEAN to keep the People in Obedience; That the Church would never stand upon a firm and solid Foundation, till Discipline and Excommunication were used to purge it, to give a stop to Licentiousness, to banish Vice, and to mend Manners; and that whosoever rejected the lawful and moderate use of Excommunication, shew'd himself to be none of Christ's Sheep.*

But we likewise observe in their Writings, that they had the ill fortune, of not being able to succeed in their design: they say openly, that they met on all hands with

\* *Calvini Epist. & Responsa, Pag. 337. Disciplinam jure vocare possumus optimum, atque adeo unicum retinendæ obedientiæ vinculum. Et paulo post: Itaque Ecclesias nostras tum demum rite suffultas arbitror, ubi isto nervo colligatæ fuerint. Et pag. 336. Caterum non aliter consistet Ecclesiæ incolumitas, quam si ad eam purgandam, frænas libidines, tollenda flagitia, corrigendos perversos mores, vigeat Excommunicatio, cujus moderatum usum quisquis recusat, præsertim admonitus, se ex Christi ovibus non esse prodit.*

insuperable Obstacles: \* That there was a Cause  
company of Ministers, who preached a Gospel II.  
without Discipline, and who even question'd whe-  
ther the use of Discipline was to be brought back  
into the Church: That some introduc'd Licenti-  
ousness instead of Christian Liberty, and thought  
that to reject the Pope was enough in order to be  
truly Evangelical: That others observing the  
daily decay of Christianity, wish'd that the Au-  
thority of the Ministry might be restor'd, but  
that either they did not see the true way of bring-  
ing this about, or that if they saw it they despair'd  
of success: That those who endeavour'd to revive  
Discipline were call'd Tyrants, who would have  
usurp'd the Liberty of the Church: That the  
People had shaken off all restraint, and were ac-  
custom'd to Licentiousness; as if by taking away  
the Pope's Authority, the Ministry had been de-  
stroy'd, and the Word of God and the Sacraments  
had lost their efficacy. They have said, that the  
want of Discipline did produce Corruption:

\* *Capit. in Calv. Epist. p. 7.* Peritiores rerum Ecclesiasti-  
carum, cernunt in Causâ (ejectionis vestræ) fuisse totam  
Cohortem Ministrorum, Evangelium docentium sine Disci-  
plinâ, imò ne scientium an Disciplina sit in Ecclesiam re-  
vocanda. Otiosam enim functionem quidam tueri malunt,  
quam fructuosam: Quidam licentiam pro Christi libertate  
induxerunt, quasi ab Evangelio stent, qui jugum Pontifi-  
cum abjecerint. Aliqui vero id est, plerique omnes, ani-  
madvertentes rem Christi indies abire in pejus optarent  
quidem restitutam auctoritatem Ministrorum, sed aut veram  
ejus reparandæ rationem ignorant, aut eam videntes despe-  
rant prorsus. *Et paulo post:* Auditis enim Tyranni esse vo-  
luistis in liberam Ecclesiam, voluistis novum Pontificatum  
revocare, atque id genus Contumeliarum, &c. *Et paulo  
post:* Nam frænum prorsus excussit Multitudo, quæ assueta  
est & educata propemodum ad Licentiam, quasi authorita-  
tem Pontificiorum frangendo, vim verbi, Sacramentorum,  
& totius Evangelii evacuaemus, &c.

That

**Part II.** \* *That because there were neither Censures, nor Corrections, nor Penances, nor Excommunications in the Church, even for the greatest Crimes, the People and Youth did commit all manner of Sins: That no Person was restrain'd by shame, and that Men became proud and altogether impenitent: That if the more odious Sins were expiated by Penance and a reasonable severity, as St. Paul enjoins, and as it was antiently practised, there would be less Corruption and more Zeal in the Church.*

These were the Sentiments of many Doctors in the last Age; they saw that the want of Order and Discipline, was going to bring Libertinism into the Church. But yet their endeavours were not altogether useless. Some Churches drew considerably nearer to the Apostolical Institution, and there are some where Discipline is not yet quite abolish'd: They still make use of some part of those means prescrib'd by the Gospel for the Correction of Manners: They do not admit all Persons indifferently to the Sacrament: They retain the use of publick Penances, and even in some places of Excommunication. But yet there are

\* Bucerus de animarum cura, p. 171. Et quis negare potest, cum omnium peccatorum, quam atrocia etiam illa sint, adeo nulla increpatione, castigatio aut poenitentia est in Ecclesia, hinc fieri ut juvenus & plebs eo leviores reddantur ad omne malum. Pudor & dedecus abeunt, homines efferruntur, redduntur (ut Paulus conqueritur) Omnino impoenitentes, dedunt se libidini, omnique vanitati, denique vita est petulanti atque perditâ satiari nullo modo possunt.

Idem, p. 189. Si crassiora delicta severiore poenitentia compensarentur, ut sanctus docet Apostolus, utque in sancto atque salutari usu fuit in Ecclesiis veteribus bene constitutis: Major inde apud omnes Dei Filios peccatorum fuga & detestatio, majorque vitæ Christianæ Zelus existeret, quam proli dolor! hodie apud nos deprehendimus. Vide & Bucer Epistolam ad Calvinum, in Epistol. Calvini. pag. 370 & 371.

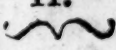
still many things wanting in the Order and Government of those Churches, as will appear by comparing their present practice with that of the Primitive Church, and with the Canons of the antient Discipline. I do not pretend that in this matter the practice of the first Christians ought to be copied in every thing, but certainly in many Points we ought to conform to it.

If we examine in what manner Discipline is administred now a-days, we may observe several defects in it which are very considerable. For instance, we shall find Churches where Excommunication is us'd about matters of no great importance; where that which is call'd Excommunication, is rather a Civil Sentence or Punishment, than an Ecclesiastical Censure; and where not the Pastors of the Church but civil Judges excommunicate. Another common Fault is, that Discipline is exercis'd only upon two or three sorts of Sinners: Fornicators and notorious Blasphemers are indeed severely proceeded against, but a great many Persons are suffer'd in the Church, who have nothing of Christianity in their Deportment; such as Drunkards, idle People, and several other Sinners; whom the divine Laws subject as much to the rigour of Discipline, as Adulterers. It would be altogether necessary to use Discipline against those who enter into Marriage only to conceal their shame, and yet in most Churches no satisfaction is demanded of such People: This is a matter of very great



Part II. moment. There is no sufficient care taken, to be satisfy'd about the sincerity of Sinners Repentance, when they are to be restor'd to the Peace of the Church. The Apostolical Precept about avoiding all familiar intercourse with scandalous Sinners is out of use. By all this we may see that few Churches can boast of a pure Discipline. But supposing that true Discipline might be found in some places, yet how many defects do creep into the best constituted Churches, either thro the stubbornness of Sinners, the opposition of corrupt Magistrates, or the fault and carelesness of Pastors? The best Laws are good for nothing when not observ'd: so that whether those who ought to exercise Discipline for the giving a stop to Scandals, do it not, or whether they have not the power to do it, it is still true that Corruption proceeds from the want of Discipline.

What must we say then of those Churches where Discipline is wholly unknown? where neither Church nor Pastors have any Authority to govern or inspect; where Ministers dare not exclude any one from the Sacrament, but admit all Persons indifferently to the Holy Communion; which Abuse would have been thought an unheard of Profanation in the Primitive Church; and where all publick Penances are out of doors? I say nothing of Excommunication; if any Man should propose the restoring of it, his design would be look'd upon in many places as an unpardonable Crime: And the strangest thing

thing of all, is, that this want of Discipline Cause  
is to be found in Churches, which acknow- II.  
ledg the Scripture for the Rule of Religion;   
and that there are Divines who instead of  
promoting the re-establishment of Discipline,  
oppose it, and maintain that none are to be  
debar'd from the Sacrament; who cannot  
endure the very name of Excommunication,  
and who pretend that where the Magistrate  
punishes Vice, there is no need of any other  
Discipline. Those Divines have not the grea-  
ter number on their side, but their Opinion  
prevails, because it favours Policy and Li-  
centiousness.

We are to impute to this fatal Remifness,  
the looseness and irregularity of the Manners  
of Christians. I need not insist more upon  
this, for every one is sensible of it. Good  
Order keeps Men in Duty; but where there  
is no Order, Vice must of necessity bear  
sway. What should restrain People? Ex-  
cepting some general Admonitions which are  
deliver'd in Sermons, every Person is left to  
himself, and lives as he thinks fit. Private  
Men are not bound to give an account of  
their Conduct to any body. Those who  
lead the most Unchristian Life, Swearers,  
Covetous, Profane, Leud and Intemperate  
Persons, all sorts of People, live peaceably  
in the Church; they are reputed Members  
of it, they are mingled among true Christi-  
ans, they enjoy with them the same spiritual  
Privileges, at least in all outward appear-  
ance, and they are admitted to the same Sa-  
craments.

Part II. *craments.* As long as Things are in this state, we must not hope to see any abatement of Corruption.

But that nothing may be omitted which may contribute to the clearing of this matter, it is necessary to answer some Objections, and that which is alledg'd to excuse, or even to justify the taking away of the antient Discipline.

1. Against the restoring of Discipline, some say, (which was objected in the last Age) *That it is sufficient for the Edification of the Church, that the Gospel should be preached in it; since that is the ordinary means which God has appointed to procure the Conversion and the Salvation of Men.* The Gospel no doubt is sufficient to teach us all that is necessary to be known in Religion; but it is not true that God makes use only of the Preaching of the Gospel, for the Salvation of Men: For he uses other Means besides, as for instance, the Sacraments; and those Means, among which Discipline is to be reckon'd, are prescrib'd by the Gospel it self; so that whosoever submits to the Gospel, must likewise submit to that Order we speak of. But further, the Gospel barely preach'd and known is not sufficient to Salvation; nothing but the practice of the Gospel can save a Man, and it is to little purpose to preach it, if the Manners of Christians are not regulated, and if Discipline is not us'd to that end, as a Mean appointed of God. As to Preaching it will be shewn in the next Chapter, That  
Men

Men ascribe more efficacy to it than it has, Cause  
and that there is a mistake in the Opinion II.  
which they commonly entertain of it. ~~~~~

2. Those who are for mystical Devotion and Piety will certainly say, *That Discipline is not essential to Religion, that it is a matter of external Order, and that external things are useful only to carnal and imperfect Christians.* But I desire those who have such Opinions to speak more reverently of an Order of which God is the Author, and which the Apostles have so expressly recommended. It cannot be thought that the Apostles, who did abolish the Mosaical Ceremonies, would at the same time have burden'd the Church with needless Laws; or that they would have interposed Christ's Authority, for the observation of an Order, which had not been necessary. They are desir'd to consider besides, That Men have Bodies as well as Souls; that among a great multitude, there are many Persons of a gross Understanding, who cannot be restrain'd but by external Laws; and that it is absurd to pretend that Men can be so spiritualiz'd, as to need no longer outward Aids to Piety. But it is a gross Error to look upon Discipline, as an Order purely external: For properly speaking it is an Order altogether Spiritual. Discipline does not touch either Mens Bodies or their Estates, it uses only spiritual means; and it is efficacious no farther, than as it operates upon the Heart and Conscience.



## Part II.

3. But others will cast the Objection I have now confuted into this Form; they will say, *That in external things, among which Discipline is to be ranked, Churches are at liberty to regulate themselves as they think good.* I grant that Churches have that Liberty in indifferent things, which are not appointed by a Divine Authority; but this cannot be applied to the matter in hand. An establishment of Divine Institution cannot be reckon'd among things indifferent. Do we look upon the Sacraments as indifferent Ceremonies, which we are not bound to observe, under pretence that they are but external Rites and Ordinances? Churches indeed have a Liberty where there is no Law, tho still that Liberty is to be wisely and discreetly us'd, for fear of Confusion; but when God has settl'd an Order, Churches are not at liberty to chuse another, to make new Laws, and to set up a new form of Government. Such a Liberty would be mere Unruliness, and a criminal and sacrilegious Presumption. This would be the way to multiply Sects and Religions infinitely.

4. The same answer may serve to refute such, who to justify the Practice of those Churches, which do not observe the form of Discipline us'd in the Primitive Church, make a distinction between Discipline and the Manner of exercising it. They own that *Discipline is necessary, and that there ought to be Order in the Church; but they think that the way of exercising Discipline may vary, according to Time, Place, and other Circumstances.* This

Distinc-

Distinction may be receiv'd, when the Cause is only about some indifferent circumstances ; but it is alledg'd without Reason, when the question is concerning the Substance or the Essence of the thing it self. The Disorder we complain of is, That what is essential in Discipline has been taken away, to substitute in lieu of it another Order, and set up a new Discipline of which the Apostles did not speak a word. Now that which is most essential in Discipline, and which is not observ'd in most Churches, is this, That scandalous Sinners are not to be suffer'd in the Church ; and yet they are suffer'd : That they are to be warn'd and reprov'd in private, and even in publick ; this is seldom done, and in some Places never done : That Christians ought to separate themselves from those who live disorderly ; and this is not observ'd : That upon certain occasions, they are to be cut off from the Body of the Faithful ; but Pastors dare not so much as mention this : That the Administration of Discipline belongs to Pastors ; that they ought to preside, proceed and judg in all emergent Cases. The Scripture gives them that Right, and ascribes to them those Offices ; but they have been devested of them, new Political Bodies have been erected, in which there is but one Churchman, or two for form sake, who often have neither Vote nor Authority in them. It is of Divine Right that Sinners should give real Proofs of their Repentance, as for instance, by making Restitution, by

Part II. Reconciliations, by acknowledging their fault : but this is not now requir'd of them ; nay, in some Churches it is not so much as inquir'd into. It is against all the Laws of Discipline, that none should be excluded the Holy Communion, and yet in most places this is not regarded. Lastly, it is an Apostolical Order and Practice, that Sinners should be receiv'd to the Peace of the Church, but 'tis after they have fitted themselves for it, by a sincere, and if the Case requires by a publick Repentance ; but now a-days those antient Rules of Discipline are abolish'd.

After all this, can it be said that no alteration has happen'd in the essence of Discipline, but only in the manner of it ? Censures, Suspensions, Excommunication, and the Authority of Pastors are taken away ; the Government appointed by the Scripture is overturn'd, another and quite different form is brought into the room of it ; and yet People will say, that the question is not about the thing it self, but the manner ! It is not sufficient to have any kind of Order ; the Order which God has prescrib'd, and no other, ought to be observ'd. Some Circumstances may be varied according to the necessities of Churches, but the substance of the thing it self is unalterable.

5. Many are of opinion, That the Authority of the Magistrate supplies the want of Discipline, and that this way is by much preferable to the other. I confess, that the Punishments inflicted by the Magistrate upon

on

on scandalous Livers are of great use; that Cause  
Magistrates who use their Authority to suppress Vice are very commendable; and that II.  
Discipline is of much greater force, when supported by the Authority of Civil Powers. But still the Divine Institution is to be preserv'd intire; it does neither belong to the Magistrate, nor to any Power to alter that which God has commanded, and to deprive the Church of her Right. After all, the Discipline of the Magistrate is not the Discipline of the Church; these are two distinct things, and of a quite different nature. The Magistrate uses external and corporal Punishments; Fines, Imprisonments, Banishments, Force, &c. These Methods are certainly useful, they may terrify Sinners, and in some respects keep them in awe and duty: But besides this, it is necessary to work upon the Heart, and to bind the Conscience by those Methods which Discipline uses; or else it is to be fear'd, that we shall only make Hypocrites, and that Men will abstain from Evil more out of the fear of Punishment, and upon temporal Considerations, than from motives of Conscience.

Nay there are People, who if they had nothing to fear but a Fine, or some Days Imprisonment, would gladly purchase at that rate the liberty of sinning; and fancy that provided satisfaction be made to the Magistrate, there is no more to be done for the clearing of their Conscience. Besides, what a disorderly thing is it, that an Offender who  
is



Part II. is prosecuted, fin'd, and imprison'd by the Magistrate, should still be treated like a Member of the Church, and admitted to the Holy Sacrament? The Magistrate's Authority is therefore a very efficacious mean to promote the Glory of God, when it is join'd with Ecclesiastical Discipline: but to think that Civil Laws are sufficient to regulate Manners, and to reclaim Sinners, is a conceit almost as unreasonable, as it would be ridiculous to proceed against Robbers, or the other Disturbers of the publick Peace, only by spiritual Punishments. Let no Man then confound those things which God has set asunder.

6. It is farther said, *That these Rules of Discipline were only for a time, and that the times are alter'd.* But how can it be prov'd that the Laws of Discipline were made only for a time? Is there any ground for this either in the Scripture, or in the Nature of those Laws? Are the Laws of Discipline like those of *Moses*, which do no longer bind us? Did the Apostles make this distinction? Did *St. Paul* say upon this Subject, as he did in another Case, \* *I only give my Judgment; I have no Commandment of the Lord?* Does he not speak positively of the Order according to which the Church is to be govern'd? Does he not command in the Name of *Jesus Christ*? Does he not establish general Laws and Maxims for all the Churches? The Apostles indeed appointed some Rules, the ob-

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\* 1 Cor. VII.

servation of which is not necessary at this Cause  
day, because those Regulations were visibly II.

founded upon particular Reasons which do no longer subsist, and therefore they are not propos'd as general Laws. But the Reasons upon which Discipline is founded, and which are taken from Order and Edification, from the Honour of the Church, from the Conversion of Sinners, and from the Nature of the Christian Religion, those Reasons do still subsist; and consequently the Rules of Discipline are sacred and inviolable, especially being deliver'd by way of Command, and repeated in so many Places. The Christian Church is to be diffused all the World over; sometimes she is Persecuted, and sometimes she enjoys a Calm: but whatever State she may be in, her Nature does not alter. As there is but one God, one Church, one Faith, one Baptism; so there is to be but one Order, at least as to essential Things, and that Order ought to be conformable to the Laws of the Apostles. Or else there will be, as in fact we see there are, as many different Customs and Disciplines, as there are Kingdoms, States, Provinces, nay Towns and Churches.

7. It is commonly objected, *That the Zeal of the Primitive Christians is extinct, that Men are now very Corrupt, and that it would be impossible to bring them to a submission to the Discipline of the Church.* But that very thing that Men are corrupt, proves the necessity of Discipline. Order is never more necessary than when all is in Confusion.

St.

**Part II.** \* *St. Paul says, that the Law is not made for a righteous Man, but for the Lawless and Disobedient.* Discipline seems more necessary now, than it was in the first Centuries; because then Persecution kept Corruption out of the Church: but when the Church is in Peace, Vices and Scandals do infallibly multiply; and then it is that good Discipline is of excellent use.

But then it is said, *that it would be impossible to restore it, considering the Disposition Men are now in.* I confess this design would meet with opposition. Those who go about to restore Order and suppress Licentiousness, must still encounter difficulties; but yet this might be compass'd, if Princes and Magistrates did not oppose it. If all the Pastors did set about it, with a Zeal accompanied with Prudence and Gentleness; if they did carefully instruct the People concerning the necessity of Discipline, and if they did apply themselves to the Civil Powers with equal vigour and respect; they would carry the point at last. After all, the People are not in a worse disposition than the Heathens were in, before the Apostles preach'd the Gospel to them; and there are Christian Princes and Magistrates who have Piety and Zeal. If then the Heathens of old could be brought under the Discipline of Christ, in the sight of Heathen Magistrates, should we despair of subjecting Christians to it? The instance of

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\* 1 Tim. I. 9.

those Churches where Discipline is observ'd, Cause  
at least in part, and where Excommunica- II.  
tion and publick Penances are in use, shews  
that there is no impossibility to succeed in  
this design. If the thing was impossible,  
God would never have commanded it.

8. In the last place, here is an Objection  
which is commonly urg'd with great force,  
and which seems to have much weight in it.  
It is said, *That we have reason to fear that  
Discipline would bring Tyranny into the Church,  
and that those who govern it, would then assume  
too much Authority.* Let us see whether this  
Fear be well grounded.

And First, if we suppose this Principle,  
That Discipline is instituted of God, and  
that the Apostles committed it to the Church  
and her Governours, which I think has been  
fully demonstrated; will it not be a kind of  
Blasphemy, to say, That Discipline is not  
to be suffer'd, lest Pastors should become Ty-  
rants? Would not this reflect upon our Sa-  
viour and his Apostles, as if they had esta-  
blish'd a dangerous Order, which is apt to  
introduce Tyranny? At this rate the Apo-  
stles and the Primitive Christians did in-  
croach upon the Liberty of the People, and  
the Authority of Princes. Every Christian  
will abhor this Consequence, and yet it re-  
sults naturally from the opinion of those who  
reject Discipline for fear of Tyranny. Be-  
sides, supposing that Christ has instituted  
the Order we speak of, can we thus argue  
against it, without shaking off his Yoke?  
But



**Part II.** But Men do not consider this. They fancy that every thing that is granted to the Church is granted to her Governours; whereas they should remember that it is paid or yielded to Christ, whose Right it is, and who cannot be despoiled of it without Sacrilege. Here we might retort the Charge upon those who bring it. They talk of Tyranny; and is it not an intolerable piece of Tyranny, to oppose a Divine Law, and to debar the Church and her Governours of the enjoyment of those Rights which God has given them?

But to come closer to the Objection. Nothing can be fear'd but one of these two Inconveniences; either an Empire over Consciences, or some prejudice to the publick Tranquillity, and to the Authority of Civil Powers.

As to the first of these two Inconveniences, there is no great Reason to fear it; since the Apostles who so expressly recommend Discipline to Pastors, forbid them at the same time to assume a Dominion over Consciences. Provided Discipline is us'd only in those cases, and in that manner which the Scripture appoints, and as it was practis'd by the first Christians\*, nothing like this is to be fear'd from it. The Discipline we speak of, does not meddle with Points of Faith, and so fear in this respect is groundless. As to those Cases which concern Manners, Injustice can hardly be committed a-

\* 1 Pet. V. 2. 2 Cor. I. 24.

bout them. The Church does not judg of Cause  
secret and unknown Facts. She only pro- II.  
ceeds against notoriously scandalous and im-  
penitent Sinners, and she receives them as  
soon as they express their Repentance; and  
is there any thing of Tyranny or Danger in  
this? It is proper to observe here especially  
with reference to Excommunication, which  
is thought the severest part of Discipline,  
That when the Church proceeds to that ex-  
tremity, she does not properly speaking, act  
by way of Authority, as if she had an abso-  
lute Power to punish a Sinner, and to cut  
him off from her Body: But that Sinner  
has already by his Life cut himself off from  
the Communion of Christ, he is no longer  
a member of the Church; so that the Church  
only declares that, which is done and deter-  
min'd already, tho she should not declare it.

Neither is there any caue to fear that  
the publick Peace should be disturb'd by the  
exercise of Discipline. On the contrary, So-  
ciety will be the better regulated for it. For  
Discipline does not touch Civil Matters.  
Excommunication it self does not hinder a  
Man from being still a member of the Com-  
monwealth, nor that all the Duties of Ju-  
stice and Humanity should be discharg'd to-  
wards him.

As for the Authority of Civil Powers, it  
is no ways injur'd by this, as evidently ap-  
pears from the first Christians exercising Dis-  
cipline openly in the sight of the Heathen  
Magistrates, without any opposition from  
them.

**Part II.** them. Christ did not come into the World to erect a Temporal Kingdom, nor to draw Men off from their Submission to the Authority of Kings and Magistrates. It is the Principle of a true Christian, \* *To render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's.* This Principle will not deceive a Man; and as long as we adhere to it, all things will be in order. Religion is so far from giving any just umbrage to Princes, that on the contrary it strengthens their Authority. Submission to the higher Powers is recommended by the Apostles in the most earnest manner. The Christians of the first Ages, who were very strict observers of Discipline, distinguish'd themselves by their Loyalty to Princes. Nay it is observable, That their Discipline which was so severe against Sinners, was as strict against those who were wanting in the Fidelity and Respect due to Superiors; witness that Canon, † which enjoins the Deposition of those Bishops and Clergymen, who should offer an Affront to the Prince or his Officers.

Whoever will take the pains to weigh this matter, will acknowledg that Discipline is a distinct thing from the Civil Power. Each of these has its bounds and limits. The Church does not touch the Body nor Civil matters, and it is not the Magistrate's business, to regulate things relating to Conscience and Sal-

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\* Mat. XXII. 21. † Can. Apost. 83.

vation. Indeed if Magistrates imagine that they have a right to govern the Church as they think fit, and that they hold the same rank in it which they hold in the Civil Society, so that the Ministers of Religion are but their Officers; Discipline may seem to them to lessen their Authority: But let those who entertain such thoughts see how they can reconcile them with the Gospel, and with the Nature of the Christian Religion.

Notwithstanding all this it will be said, that Churchmen have been known to usurp a Dominion over Consciences, and over Kings. It is true, Churchmen have abus'd their Authority; but because a thing has been abus'd, is it therefore to be abolish'd? Wise Men will rather say, that things ought to be restor'd to their natural State, and to their lawful Use; else the whole Authority of Kings and Magistrates might be pull'd down, and we might argue thus: Monarchical Government is liable to great Inconveniences, Kings have been Tyrants and Usurpers, therefore there must be no more Kings: Magistrates and Judges have been unjust, covetous, cruel; and therefore no Magistrates are to be endur'd. Would not this Argument be extravagant and impious? and yet the like Argument is us'd against Discipline. In Church as well as in State-Government there will be always some Inconveniency to be fear'd; this Evil is almost unavoidable, there being no Form of Government which the Malice of Men may not

U                      abuse:

Cause

II.



**Part II.** abuse: But those Abuses are, without comparison, a less Evil than Anarchy, which is the most dangerous State of all.

But let us clear the Matter of Fact, upon which the Objection I am now confuting is founded: It is suppos'd, that Discipline did introduce Tyranny; but, on the contrary, it was upon the Ruins of Discipline that Tyranny was erected. This is known to all those, who have any knowledg of Antiquity. When did Bishops and Clergymen usurp that excessive Authority over Mens Estates, Persons and Consciences? It was when the Observation of the Antient Discipline was slacken'd, when Discipline began to wear out of use; when Sinners, and especially great Men, were exempted for Mony; when that which should have been transacted by the whole Church was refer'd only to the Clergy; and when publick Confession was chang'd into a private one. It was by these means, and not by the due Exercise of Discipline, that Churchmen made themselves Masters of all.

What we ought to do then is this, First, to enquire what is of Divine Institution in Discipline, and to restore that; in the next place to consider what the Salvation of Sinners, and the Honour of the Church require, and what was good and edifying in the Practice of the Primitive Church, in order to conform to it; and lastly, to provide, by good Laws, that no Man may exceed the bounds of his Calling; particularly, that in restoring

to the Clergy their lawful Authority, all just Cause  
measures be taken to prevent their abusing II.  
it. If Christian Princes are bound to preserve the Rights of the Church, they ought likewise to take care that nothing be done against their own Authority, and to punish those who oppose it, or who disturb the Civil Society, whether Ecclesiasticks or Laymen. This we are to treat of in another place.

Besides, when we speak for the re-establishment of Discipline, we mean that Pastors should be subjected to it as well as their Flocks; and that if there is an Order in the Church to regulate the Manners of Christians, there should be one also to regulate the Clergy, and to lay strict Obligations on them to discharge their Duty in all its parts; and that, according to the Antient Practice, Discipline ought to be more severe against the Ecclesiasticks, who fail in their Office, than against the People. But as we have complain'd in this Chapter of the want of Discipline, with relation to the Church in general, so we are going to shew in the next, that this want is neither less observable, nor less fatal, in those things which concern the Governors of the Church.

I conclude with saying, that in order to remedy the Corruption of Manners among Christians, it is absolutely necessary to restore the use of Discipline. This is what has been and is still heartily wish'd for, by many Persons of eminent Learning and Piety; and it is that which I desire all those who have a

Part II. Zeal for the Glory of God, to take into  
 ~~~~~ their serious consideration.

### CAUSE III.

#### *The Defects of the Clergy.*

**I**N searching after the Causes of the Decay of Piety, we cannot but enquire, whether Corruption does not proceed from the Pastors and Governors of the Church. Pastors are appointed to oppose the Progress of Vice, and to be publick Fountains of Instruction, Edification, and good Example; so that in truth their Ministry is of most excellent use, when duly exercis'd: But when Vice reigns, when Scandals multiply, that general Corruption is, if not a certain Proof, at least a strong Presumption that there is some fault in Pastors.

If we would be satisfy'd about this matter, we need but reflect upon the Nature of their Office, and on their way of discharging it: This is what I design to enquire into in this Chapter. In order to which I shall consider, 1. What Functions and Duties are annex'd to the Office of Pastors. And, 2. What Qualifications are requisite in them to discharge it worthily.

- I. There are two principal Functions incumbent on Pastors; Instruction, and the Government of the Church.

1. It would be needless to prove that the  
 Office

Office of Pastors obliges them to instruct the People, and to preach the Gospel; for this is beyond all question. It will be fitter to observe, that the fruit of publick Instructions, deliver'd in Sermons, depends upon two things; the Matters treated of, and the Way of proposing them: so that the Faults committed in Sermons are either in the Things themselves, or in the Manner of handling them.

1. The Matters handled in Sermons are either of Doctrine or Morality. What has been said in the first Chapter of this Treatise, may serve to discover to us the Defects in Preaching, with relation to these two Heads. Those who preach the Gospel do not sufficiently instruct the People, either in the fundamental Doctrines, or in the Duties of Religion: And as Catechizing is properly design'd for explaining these Truths and Duties, I think Ignorance and Corruption chiefly proceed from this, That in most Churches things are not well order'd with reference to Catechizing; they are neither frequent enough, nor so proper for Instruction as they should be. Besides, Catechizing is almost every where neglected, if not despis'd. The common Notion is, that Catechisms are only for Children, and for the meaner sort of People. The Function of a Catechist, which was antiently so considerable in the Church, is look'd on now as a Function of no great importance, and is usually committed to Persons of the least Knowledge and Experience.



Part II. These Faults might easily be remedy'd.

One of the most useful Establishments in Churches would be to increase the Number of Catechisms, and to appoint them instead of the Sermon. But to render them more useful and more frequented, it would be necessary to establish two sorts of them. In those of the first sort, the Elements of Religion should be explain'd in an easy and familiar manner, for the benefit of Children, and of the less-knowing part of Christians: The other should be for those who have attain'd a higher degree of Knowledg; and in these, Matters that had been propos'd but generally before, should be more fully and exactly handled. But if it be thought that an Establishment of this nature, and the multiplying of Catechizings, might meet with Difficulty and Obstructions, it would be necessary at least for the instruction of great numbers of Persons, who never assist at those Exercises, that Ministers should be oblig'd to preach upon the same Subjects which are commonly treated in Catechisms.

As for Sermons, the Church would reap more benefit from them, if Preachers did always shew true Judgment in the choice of the Matters they handle. We must not think that all sorts of Subjects are instructive alike, and that in order to preach the Gospel, it is enough to speak of God in a Sermon, and to take a Text out of Scripture. Every Subject ought to be propos'd and press'd accord-

ing

ing to its importance. To insist upon matters of lesser moment, whilst those which it most concerns Christians to be inform'd about are neglected, is to swerve from the true intendment of Preaching. But because all Preachers have not the capacity to make this Choice, it would be fitting that part of the matter of their Discourses should be appointed and prescrib'd to them by a Law: For when they are ty'd to no Rule, when they are at liberty to preach upon any Subject which they think fit to chuse, it happens that many, instead of handling the most important things in Religion, and of consulting the present State and Necessities of their Flocks, apply themselves to various Subjects, which are of no great Edification.

Preachers, for the most part, consult only their own Inclination in the choice of their Matter; and when they pitch upon a Subject, it is rather because it pleases them, and because they apprehend a facility in treating it, than out of regard to the necessities of their Congregations. Those who are fond of Mysteries and Allegories, apply their time and studies to the expounding of the Prophecies, and to the unfolding of the Types of the Old Testament: Those who are given to disputing, fill their Sermons with nothing else but Controversy. And the same may be said of speculative Divines, who are conversant in the Fathers and History; they entertain the People with those things which are the ordinary

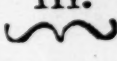
## Part II. Subject of their Meditations and Studies.

~~~~~ I do not mean that such things ought never to be spoken of; they may sometimes be touch'd upon, provided this be done judiciously: But they have a sorry Notion of Religion and Preaching, who make those matters their main Business, and fancy they have entirely fulfill'd all the parts of the Gospel-Ministry, when they have preach'd upon Types, or Controversy.

What I have now said, may be apply'd to the choice of Texts: \* *All Scripture indeed, as St. Paul says, is profitable for Instruction*; that Divine Book contains nothing but what is useful: but yet the various usefulness of the several parts of Scripture is to be distinguish'd, and it must be own'd that some Places are more useful and instructive than others. Some difference is to be made between those Books and Chapters, which explain the Doctrine of Redemption, the Design of Christ's coming into the World, or the Duties of a Christian Life; and those which serve only to acquaint us with the Order of Times, and to confirm the certainty of History. These last have their use, since the Truth of History is one of the main Proofs of the Truth of Religion; but those Places are more useful which treat of what we are to believe or to do in order to Salvation. It is of another sort of importance to explain the Gospel, than to preach upon the Book of *Joshua* or *Ruth*,

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\* 2 Tim. III. 16.

or upon some Places of the Prophets. I am Cause  
not ignorant that some have thought that III.  
the Scripture is equally rich every where;   
that all Doctrines might be drawn from all  
Texts; that those Chapters and Verses,  
which seem the most barren, and where  
there appears nothing extraordinary, con-  
tain Mysteries and Treasures which might  
exhaust even the Meditations of Angels:  
but this Conceit is so absurd and repugnant  
to Sense, that I do not think it worth my  
while to confute it.

Morals, being so essential a part of Reli-  
gion, should be very particularly insisted  
upon by Preachers, and yet few do it; so  
that Morality of all things is that which is  
the most superficially handled in the greatest  
part of Sermons. This Fault in Preachers  
proceeds from several Causes: Some have a  
Prejudice against Morality, and think it  
ought not to be insisted on: Others, who  
are conceited with vain Learning, imagine  
that to preach Morals, argues but an ordi-  
nary measure of Parts, and little Skill in  
Divinity; and that it becomes them better  
to soar after high Speculations, and to dive  
into the Mysteries of Faith, and of the  
most sublime Theology. This Custom of  
insisting more upon Doctrine than Morals,  
proceeds also from another Cause, which is,  
that in this last Age Divines were fain to  
be continually explaining and disputing,  
and so the same Method has been follow'd  
ever since.



**Part II.**

I am apt to think besides, that many Divines neglect Morality, because the treating of it is more difficult than the explaining Doctrinal matters. Let those supercilious and speculative Divines say what they will, the right handling of Morality is the hardest thing in Preaching. It is easy to explain a Text, or a point of Doctrine; and a Man must be very meanly gifted, if with the help of a Commentary, or a Common-Place, he is not able to do the feat, and to furnish out his hour: but to preach Morals is quite another thing. I confess there is a way of preaching Morality, which requires no great pains. If men content themselves with delivering moral Sayings concerning Vice and Vertue, this may be done without much Labour; but when a Preacher pursues true Morality, when he is to master the Hearts of Men, to reform the Manners of a whole Congregation, to encounter the Inclinations of his Hearers, and to make them renounce their Passions and Prejudices; then it is that he meets with many and great difficulties, this is an inexhaustible Spring of Labour and Meditation, and a Task which few Preachers care to take upon them.

In Religion, Doctrine shou'd never be separated from Morality, nor one of these prefer'd before the other; but yet it is necessary to insist more upon Morality than upon Doctrine, not only because the design of our whole Religion is to make us good men, but also because Morality cannot effectually be taught

taught without being much dwelt upon. It is only by enlarging on matters, and entering into many particulars, that the two ends of Morality are to be attain'd, which are instructing Men in their Duty, and persuading them to the practice of it. Cause III.

Morality is of a vast extent, as may appear by considering how many Duties are compris'd under these three Heads of Christian Morals, Piety, Justice, and Temperance. Besides these Duties, which are common to all Men, there are some particular ones relating to the different Conditions, Callings, Ages, and States which Men are in. And how many things are there to be consider'd upon all these Heads? This is not all, for these Duties vary infinitely, by reason of the diversity of Circumstances. There are almost as many different Dispositions, as there are Persons, among a great Multitude of Men, who are addicted to the same Vice; there are hardly two who are vicious in the same degree and manner. It is therefore requisite that Preachers should descend into particulars, and that they should so characterize Duties, Vertues and Vices, that every one may know himself in the Description.

And yet this relates only to bare Instruction. Now if in the next place we intend to engage Men to the Practice of these Duties, there new difficulties will arise, and no good Success can be expected but from assiduous Care and constant Labour. There are in  
Man's

Part II. Man's Heart so many different Dispositions and Motions, so many Illusions and Prejudices, so many Windings and Artifices, that a very particular Application is requir'd for us to insinuate our selves into it. When the Truths and Doctrines of Religion are to be taught, things need not be so minutely handled, and there is no occasion to use such mighty Endeavours; nay, the being very particular may be a fault. He that would instruct, so he is clear, should rather be short than prolix. The Hearers do easily apprehend the Truths which are propos'd to them, and the most corrupt Men are able to discern Truth from Error: A Libertine will find who is in the right or in the wrong, in a Dispute; but it is not so easy a thing to touch the Heart, or to conquer inveterate Habits. What Tully says, in his Dialogue of the Orator, deserves to be inserted here, it is this: \* *Passions are not to be excited in a moment, as a Proof does presently persuade so soon as it is propos'd. A Proof is confirm'd by Reasons, and Reasons clearly set out, make an impression immediately; but when we intend to raise the Passions, the success does not so much*

\* Cicero de Orat. Lib. 2. Non enim sicut Argumentum, simul atq; positum est, arripitur, alterumq; & tertium poscitur; ira misericordiam aut invidiam, aut iracundiam simulatq; intuleris, possis commovere. Argumentum enim ipsa ratione confirmat, quæ simul atq; emissæ est adhærescit. Illud autem genus Orationis, non cognitionem judicis, sed perturbationem requirit, quam consequi nisi multa, & varia, & copiosa, & simili Contentione orationis nemo potest. Quare qui aut breviter, aut summissè dicunt, docere judicem possunt, commovere non possunt.

depend

depend upon Conviction, as upon the Perturbation of the Mind; Oratory cannot have its effects then without Prolixity, Variety, Copiousness and Vehemence of Discourse. Those therefore who speak briefly and calmly, are fit to instruct, but not to move.

Cause  
III.

From these Reflections it appears, that the Method of those Preachers, who are large upon the Explication of Doctrines, and succinct upon Morals, is directly contrary to the true way of preaching; and that those do very ill understand what Morality is, who either despise it, or look upon it as the easiest thing in preaching.

We may likewise apprehend from what has been said, what are the most ordinary Faults of Preachers when they treat of Morals. I shall observe three of them. Their Morality is *too general*, it is *defective*, and it is sometimes *false*.

1. Many Preachers are *too general* in handling Morality. This is the Head which is the most slightly touch'd upon. They spend the greater part of their Sermons in explaining the Sense of a Text, they sift all the Words, and examine all the Circumstances of it with the utmost Nicety: In a word, they drain the Subject. But when they come to the Application, they content themselves with two or three general Uses; they address to their Auditory some loose Exhortations to a good Life; even when they are to speak upon a moral Subject, they confine themselves for the most part to general Considerations:

Nothing



**Part II.** Nothing is particulariz'd, or treated with the necessary exactness. Now Generalities are of no great use in matters of Morality. To say, in general terms, that Men ought to be good, and to declaim against Sensuality or Covetousness, is that which will convince no Man. It is not bawling, or sending Sinners to Hell, that is likely to win upon them. It should be distinctly shewn, what it is to be a good Man; Vertues and Vices should be characteriz'd, and their various Kinds and Degrees observ'd; particular Rules ought to be given to the Hearers, they ought to be furnish'd with necessary Motives and Directions; we are to confute their Mistakes, and to obviate their Objections and Excuses: till we come to this, Preaching will be attended with little Success.

2. The moral Discourses of Preachers are often *defective*; for besides that they handle Morality in a superficial manner, there are some essential Articles which they seldom or never speak of, among which we may reckon Restitution. The Moralities of Preachers turn almost together on four or five Heads; they tack only some of the grosser Sins, such as Blasphemies, Uncleaness, and such other Vices: but this is to confine themselves to the first Elements of Piety and Morality. True Morality goes a great deal further. Piety does not only banish the more heinous Sins, it does besides fill the Heart with a sincere love of Vertue; it softens and rectifies the Inclinations, it produces in a Man Gentleness,

teness, Humility, Patience, Resignation to the Will of God, Divine Love, Tranquillity under all Events, Charity towards other Men, and a Zeal for Justice and Goodness. This is the main of Piety, this is what should be incessantly laid before Christians, to make them apprehend the Extent and Perfection of the Morals of the Gospel.

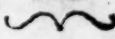
3. The Moral Discourses of Preachers are *false*; 1. When they are too remiss. 2. When they are too severe. And 3. When they are contradictory. Their Morality is too remiss, when it does not propose all the Duties of Holiness in their full latitude, when it flatters Sinners, or does not sufficiently awaken their Consciences. It is over-severe, when it raises groundless Scruples in mens Minds, when it represents as a Sin that which is not really so, or when it makes a necessary Duty of any thing which may be omitted without danger. Preachers likewise overdo things in the Pictures they draw for Vertues and Vices: If they are to speak of Covetousness, or forbidden Pleasure, they strive to make of these the most hideous Pictures they can; they paint out a covetous or a voluptuous Man as a Monster, they affect the most lively Descriptions and Figures, and their Sermons are loaded with every thing that their Collections afford upon the Subject: But all this is only noise, and so much Breath spent in vain. Such Morality does not hinder the voluptuous or covetous Man from pursuing his ordinary course,

**Part II.** course, it is rather apt to harden him in it; because as he does not see himself in the dismal Picture which is made of these Vices, so he thinks himself free from them, or at least not very guilty of them. Lastly, Preachers do sometimes deliver contradictory Morals; having not sufficiently meditated upon the Principles of Religion and Morality, they run themselves into Contradictions; they say one thing in one place, and the contrary in another; they lay down Principles which destroy the Consequences they will draw from them, or they draw Consequences which overturn the Principles they have laid down.

II. The Faults I have hitherto observ'd relate to the Matter of Preaching; those which are committed in the Manner are not indeed so essential, but yet they are important enough to deserve some notice here.

It is to no purpose to preach pure Doctrine and good Morality, if this is not done in a proper way to instruct and to persuade. The most important Truths lose their force in the mouth of a Man, who either cannot speak of them in a futable manner, or expresses them obscurely. And so likewise the way of exhorting and censuring is often the reason why Exhortations and Censures prove ineffectual; either they are not accurate or convincing enough, or they are cold and languid, or they are not season'd with Prudence and Mildness; but are a kind of Fire, which

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has more of Anger and Indiscretion than of Cause  
true Zeal in it, and which offends more than III.  
it affects or persuades the Hearers. 

Divers Considerations might be here insisted upon concerning the way of Preaching: but I think what is most material to be said on this Subject, may be reduc'd to this one thing; that the manner of Preaching is not simple and natural enough. The way of Preaching should correspond with the Design of Religion and Sermons, which is to inform the Understanding, and to move the Heart. This End is attain'd by those, who think and speak clearly and naturally, when every thing in Reasoning, Method, Stile and Exterior, is regulated by Nature and true Sense. But it has been observ'd long ago, that Preachers are particularly apt to fail in this respect. False and confus'd Ideas, unaccurate Reasonings, strain'd or impertinent Reasonings, forc'd and unnatural Expressions, are almost become the Property of that Order of Men. One would think that most Preachers take pains not to follow Nature; as if a Man was no sooner in the Pulpit, but he must speak no longer like the rest of Mankind; as if the part of a Preacher was something like that of a Prophet among the Jews. Nay this is pass'd into a Proverb; so that odd Ways, and injudicious Reflections, are call'd Ways and Reflections of Preachers.

1. If Nature was consulted, and if Men did consider the end of Preaching, they  
X would



Part II. would see, in the first place, that the Method which is follow'd by many, in the explaining of Scripture and the composing of Sermons, had need be reform'd in some respects, and that it does not agree so well as it should with the simplicity of the Gospel. For instance, Why should Time be wasted in Exordiums and Preliminaries? Why should a Preacher dwell upon the explaining of Words and Phrases which every body understands, or upon pressing the least Circumstances of a Text? What signify those needless Digressions, those Objections which no body thinks of, those Citations and Stories, which in some Countries fill up Sermons, and so many other small Niceties, which clog these kind of Discourses? All this might be let alone, without prejudice to publick Edification.

2. It is for want of consulting Nature, that Preachers are obscure: Sometimes the Obscurity of their Sermons arises from the things they speak of, when they are obscure in themselves; but at other times this Obscurity proceeds from their not having distinct Ideas of the Subjects they treat. Their Stile and Language do also contribute much to make them dark. Some use Scholastical Words and Terms of Art, which are Arabick to the People; others delight in figurative and improper Expressions, which present false Ideas to the Mind. Now they might avoid all these Faults, if they did not forsake Nature and Simplicity. But some Preachers affect the saying new and singular

singular things ; and they would be sorry if they had made use of simple and common Ideas, Reasonings and Expressions, which yet are the clearest and the best.

3. False Eloquence proceeds from the same Source. Preachers commonly aim at Eloquence ; and it is to compass this end that they take such pains in the composing and delivery of their Sermons, and that they affect a Stile, a Pronunciation and Gestures, which become a Stage-Player or a profane Orator much better than a Minister of Jesus Christ. I might remark here, that this Affectation of Eloquence is not very suitable to the Spirit of Piety which should animate a Clergyman ; but not to moralize upon this, I shall observe that these Preachers miss their Mark, by making so much work, and by using such mighty endeavours to hit it. True Eloquence, the force of a Discourse, an elevated and sublime Stile, consists in following Nature. Nothing admits of greater vehemence and loftiness than the Subjects which Religion affords. Let a Preacher be well acquainted with these, let him go about them in an easy and natural way, but especially let him feel and be thoroughly affected with them, and he needs not trouble himself about any other Helps ; he will despise all the false sparkling, and the vain Ornaments of insipid and boyish Eloquence ; and he will not be capable of speaking like a Grammar Scholar, or a Declaimer.

**Part II.** All that which costs Preachers so much Labour, flights of Wit, refin'd Thoughts, ingenious Descriptions, polite Language; all that, I say, is very mean. By such things they may raise at most a vain Admiration, but they will never instruct nor convert a Sinner: One dram of good Sense is worth more than all that.

4. Some Preachers run into another Extreme, their way of Preaching is neglected and coarse; they think to justify themselves, by saying, that they are simple and popular, that they speak naturally and without Art: but they swerve as much from Nature as the others; and as it is a Fault to be affected, it is another to be flat, homely and barbarous. It is as much against Nature, to use ridiculous and offensive Gestures, Tones and Ways, or to stand without Motion or Action in the Pulpit, as it is to play the Declaimer there.

I might add other Considerations about the manner in which the Gospel ought to be preach'd, but I should engage too far in this Subject. We may judg now whether Ignorance and Corruption do not proceed from the Defects of those who preach the Gospel. The People have scarce any Notion of Religion, but what they gather from Sermons. If Sermons then are not instructive and edifying, either because all the Truths and Duties of Christianity are not propos'd in them, or because they are ill propos'd, the People must of necessity be very much in the dark.

I shall say one word more concerning the Instruction which Pastors owe their Flocks. Publick Instructions, how useful soever they may be, are not sufficient. The

Edification of the Church requires that, upon certain occasions, Pastors should likewise instruct in private. This necessity of private Instructions may be prov'd by the following Arguments. 1. If there be none but publick Instructions and Exhortations, what Instructions can a great many Persons receive, who either do not frequent, or do not hearken to Sermons? What will become of those who hear, but do not understand what they hear; or who understand it, but forget it presently, and so do not practise it? 2. All things cannot be said in Sermons; how particular soever they may be, yet still many things remain untouch'd. Nay, there are Matters which a Preacher cannot bring into the Pulpit: Can he enumerate all the Cases in which Injustice may be committed, or Restitution is to be made? Can he specify those infinite Frauds which are practis'd in Mens several Callings and Trades? Can all Cases of Conscience, about which the Hearers want Instruction, be decided in a Sermon? Dare we insist in the Pulpit upon the head of Impurity? And may not this be one of the Reasons why that Sin is so common? If Christians then have no opportunity to be instructed in private about these Articles, they will be ignorant with relation to them as long as they



**Part II. live.** 3. In order to good Instruction it is necessary that the Teacher, and those who are taught, should communicate their Thoughts one to another ; for the Hearers may have their Doubts, they may sometimes be at a stand by reason of something which they don't know, or of some Difficulty which starts up in their Minds. Some have been hearing Sermons for these Twenty or Thirty years, who yet entertain Scruples and Doubts concerning the Fundamentals of Religion ; if such Persons receive no other Information, they will not be mov'd by any thing that is said in Publick, but they will retain their Scruples to their dying Day.

All this shews that private Instruction is a part of the Pastoral Care : And the practice of it would certainly be very useful, not only for the Edification of the People, but also to keep the Clergy from growing remiss, and to make them more diligent in the discharge of their Office ; for when they have nothing to do but to preach Sermons, it is much to be fear'd, considering Mens Propension to Laziness, that they will become negligent. It is therefore an Unhappiness that private Instructions should be almost out of use, and that there should be so little communication, about religious Matters, between the People and their Ministers. We have no Instruction remaining, but what is deliver'd from the Pulpit, and that would not be sufficient, even tho Sermons were such as they ought to be. But when private Instructions are wanting,  
and

and when Sermons are defective besides, it is impossible but that the greatest part of Christians, being destitute of necessary Informations and Aids, must live in Corruption.

Cause  
III.

II. The second Function of Pastors, which should perhaps be nam'd in the first place, is the Conduct and Government of the Church. Upon this I observe, 1<sup>st</sup>. That those do not understand the Nature of the Pastoral Office, who confine it to Preaching. There was a time when Preaching was quite laid aside, and when Churchmen did only perform Divine Service; but now a-days, in many Churches, the whole Ministry is plac'd in the Business of Sermons, and Ecclesiasticks are look'd upon not as Pastors, but Preachers; as Men whose Office it is upon certain Days and Hours to speak in the Church. Preaching is, without dispute, a part of the Office of Pastors: But it is a great mistake to think that God has appointed them only to preach; for they are entrusted besides with the Government of the Church, and this part of their Employment is at least as essential as Preaching. It is remarkable, that the Scripture speaks of Pastors in divers Places; and that the Titles it gives them, and the Functions it ascribes to them, relate chiefly to the Government of the Church. This is imply'd in the name of Bishops, Priests or Elders, Guides and Pastors. *St. Paul* has writ concerning the Duties of the Ministry: if we examine what he says of the Functions of that

Part II. Charge, and of the Qualifications of those who are to be admitted into it, we shall find that he is much larger upon the Government of the Church, than upon Preaching. To this purpose the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* may be consulted.

But further, all Churchmen are not call'd to Preaching. The Apostles distinguish their Functions; they tell us, \* *That all are not Doctors, that all do not interpret, that all do not administer the Word, that all do not teach and exhort; that some are appointed to instruct, to exhort, and to expound the Scriptures, others to govern, and others to do Works of Charity.* Tho we should suppose that there is nothing in this which relates to the extraordinary Gifts confer'd upon the first Ministers of the Gospel, and to the Order which was then observ'd; yet it is plain that these Places are to be understood, of the Gifts and Functions of ordinary Pastors.

This is confirm'd by the Practice of the Primitive Church. The principal and the most general Function of Pastors then was the Inspection and governing of the Church. Preaching was not neglected, but all Churchmen were not Preachers; this Province was committed to those who were fit for it. Would to God this Distinction was still observ'd! The Church would be better govern'd, and the Gospel better preach'd than it is.

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\* See 1 Cor. XII. 4, 5, 6, 28, 29, 30. Acts VI. 2, &c. Rom. XII. 6, 7, 8. 1 Tim. V. 17.

There are Talents requisite to preach the Gospel, which every body has not, and others are necessary for the conduct of the Church; and all these Gifts seldom meet in one Person. If then no regard is had to different Gifts and Functions, if without distinction every thing is committed to one Person, it is visible that the Church will be ill edify'd. Besides that I have shew'd, in the first Chapter of this Second Part, that it is a dangerous Notion which restrains the Ministry to Preaching. But to remove this Inconvenience, it would be necessary that a competent Number of Ecclesiasticks should be had in every Church.

1. To express my Thoughts more particularly concerning the Office of Pastors, with relation to the Government of the Church; I observe, 1<sup>st</sup>. that Discipline is worn out of use, as I have shewn at large in a Chapter upon that Subject. It is true, that this Defect is not wholly to be imputed to Pastors. If they do not govern the Church by a good Discipline, it is because they have been depriv'd of their Authority. Many of them are sensible of this Disorder, and lament it: But what can they do when they exercise their Ministry in Places where their hands are ty'd up, where they dare not refuse the Sacrament to an Adulterer, and where they should bring themselves into great troubles, and perhaps be depos'd, if they took upon them to observe the Apostolical Discipline? They are forc'd



**Part II.** forc'd then to confine themselves to Preaching, which when it is not back'd with Discipline, can never have that Effect which it would produce in conjunction with it. There was nothing left to Pastors but what could not be taken from them without abolishing the whole Ministry: All that remains is only Preaching, and administering the Sacraments. And yet for all that, a great part of the Clergy may justly be charg'd with that Fault we complain of, and with that Corruption of the People which is a consequence of it: since there are those among them who oppose the Restoration of Discipline, and look upon it as an indifferent Order; and others who are plac'd in Churches, where some Form of Discipline is left, render the Exercise of it ineffectual, either thro Imprudence and excessive Severity, or thro a shameful Remissness, and a cowardly Indulgence.

2. Besides the publick, there is a private Discipline, which consists in inspecting the Lives of private Persons, in visiting Families, in Exhortations, Warnings, Reconciliations, and in all those other Cares which a Pastor ought to take of those over whom he is constituted; for neither general Exhortations, nor publick Discipline can answer all the Occasions of the Church. There are certain Disorders, which Pastors neither can, nor ought to repress openly, and which yet ought to be remedy'd by them: In such cases private Admonitions are to be us'd. The Concern of  
Mens

Mens Salvation requires this, and it becomes Cause  
 the Pastoral Carefulness to seek the straying III.  
 Sheep, and not to let the Wicked perish for want of Warning. But these are Cares to which some Pastors do not so much as think themselves oblig'd; they content themselves with admonishing Sinners from the Pulpit. There is very little Intercourse between Pastors and those who are committed to their Charge. Private Persons live without being accountable for their Conduct to any body; and except they commit the greatest Enormities, they fancy no Man has a right to enquire into their Actions. Nothing reaches them but Sermons, and these they mind as much and as little as they please; this must needs produce Licentiousness.

The visiting of sick and dying Persons is one of the most important Functions of the Office of Pastors; but when it is not perform'd with exactness and zeal, it contributes as much as can be imagin'd to the keeping up of Security. Every one must needs see of what consequence this part of the Ministry is, if he considers that it is at the end of Life that we are to be judg'd, and that our eternal State depends upon the condition we die in: And if we reflect at the same time upon what the Scripture tells us, *\* that we shall receive in the World to come, according to the good or evil we have done in this*, we will easily apprehend what Ministers ought to do when they visit sick and dying Persons. Their

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\* 2 Cor. V. 10.

**Part II.** chief business should be to discover what state those Persons are in, that they may fute their Exhortations to it : Then is it that they ought to speak to the Conscience of Sinners, and to persuade them by all possible means to examine their Lives, and the Disposition they are in, in reference to their Salvation. And when a Minister meets, as it happens too frequently, with sick Persons, who are engag'd and harden'd in vicious Habits, or whose Repentance may justly be question'd, it is then that he had need use all his Skill and Prudence, all his Zeal and Endeavours, to save Souls which are in so great danger. Upon such occasions both the Minister and the sick Person have need of Time, Leisure and Freedom, and a hasty Discourse or Prayer signifies nothing.

And now we may judg whether a Man discharges the Office of a Pastor, who only in general exhorts dying Persons to acknowledge themselves miserable Sinners, and backs those Exhortations with Assurances of the Divine Mercy thro Jesus Christ, or who only reads some Forms of Exhortation and Prayers, as the Custom is in some places. This method is fitter to lay asleep, than to awaken a guilty Conscience ; and this way of exercising the Ministry overturns the Doctrine of a future Judgment, and most of the Principles of Religion. A Minister speaks to a sick Person of the Pardon of his Sins, he exhorts him to leave the World with Joy, he discourages to him

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of the Happiness of another Life, and fills him with the most comfortable Hopes; and perhaps, this sick Person is a Man loaded with Guilt, a Wretch who has liv'd like an Atheist, who has committed divers Sins, for which he has made no Satisfaction, who has not practis'd Restitution, who never knew his Religion, and who is actually impenitent. Such a Man ought to tremble, and yet such Consolations from the Mouth of his Pastor make him think he dies in a state of Grace.

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III.

But if this way of visiting and comforting the sick, betrays them into security, it has the same effect upon the Standers-by, who when they hear the Consolations which are administered to Persons, whom every body knows not to have led very Christian Lives, make a tacit Inference that the same things will be said to them, and that their Death will be happy, whatever their past Life may have been.

Besides the want of Ability and Zeal, there are two things which hinder Pastors from discharging, towards dying People, the important Duties to which their Office obliges them: The one is, that commonly Pastors visit the Sick only in cases of extremity; and the other is, that they have too little communication with their Flocks, and no sufficient knowledg of the Lives and Conduct of private Persons; so that being ignorant of the State and Occasions of the Sick, they cannot, at the approach of Death, administer to them wholesom Counsels and Exhortations.

These



**Part II.**

These I think are the most essential Defects of Pastors, both in the Instruction, and in the Government of the Church.

Having thus far treated of the Duties of the Pastoral Charge, I come now to consider those Qualifications with which Pastors ought to be endu'd. And these are of two sorts: *1st.* The Endowments of the Mind, by which I mean those Abilities and Talents which are necessary for the Instruction and Conduct of the Church. And, *2ly.* the Qualifications of the Heart, by which I mean Probity and Integrity of Life.

1. No man questions but that Abilities and Talents are requisite in those who exercise the Office of Ministers in the Church. (1.) Some are necessary for preaching the Gospel, and for the right expounding of Scripture. Preaching requires a greater extent of Knowledg than is usually imagin'd. To preach well, a Man should be well skill'd in Languages, History, Divinity and Morality: He should be acquainted with Man's Heart, he should be of a sagacious and discerning Spirit, and, above all things, he should have a true and exact Judgment; to say nothing of some other Qualifications which are necessary to every Man who speaks in publick.

Neither are these Endowments sufficient; particular Talents are requisite for the Conduct of the Church. To guide a Flock, and to be accountable for the Salvation of a great number of Souls, is no small Charge, nor an

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Employment which every body is fit for. A Cause  
Man, to whom the Government of a Church  
is committed, in whose Hands the exercise  
of Discipline is lodg'd, whose Duty it is both  
to exhort and reprove in publick and in pri-  
vate, and who ought to supply all the oc-  
casions of a Flock, and to be provided for all  
Emergencies; such a Man has need of a great  
deal of Knowledg, Zeal and Firmness, as  
well as of much Wisdom and Prudence, Mo-  
deration and Charity. That all these Qua-  
lifications are requisite in a Pastor, is evident  
from the nature of his Office; and *St. Paul*  
teaches it when he appoints that none shall  
be admitted to this Employment, but those  
in whom they are to be found. III.

What Effect then can the Ministry have  
when it is exercis'd by Men who want these  
Qualifications, or perhaps have the quite  
contrary; who are ignorant, who know  
nothing in matters of Discipline and Mo-  
rality; who can give no account of a great  
many things contain'd in Scripture, and  
whose whole Learning is confin'd to a Com-  
mentary; who can neither reason true, nor  
speak clearly; who are either indiscreet,  
negligent or remiss in the exercise of their  
Office? But I do not wonder that these  
Qualifications are wanting in most Clergy-  
men. Vast Numbers, who were not cut out  
for this Employment, aspire to it; and be-  
sides, these Abilities are not to be acquir'd  
without Labour and Application. Now  
many Churchmen are shamefully idle; they  
look

**Part II.** look upon their Profession as a mean to live easy; so that declining the Duties of their Place, they content themselves with the Incomes of it. Those who are to preach are more imploy'd; but their Sermons are almost their whole Business: Their Work consists for the most part in copying some Commentaries; and as soon as they have acquir'd a little Habit and Facility of speaking in publick, almost all of them give over study and labour. We may almost make the same Judgment of those Ecclesiasticks, who tho they study hard, yet do not direct their Studies to the Edification of the Church. The Learning and the Studies of Divines, I speak of those chiefly who have Cure of Souls, is often vain, and of no use for the edifying of their Flocks. They apply themselves to things sutable to their Inclinations, and their Studies are but their Amusement or their Diversion. Now he who neglects the Duties of his Calling, and pursues other Employments, differs very little from him who does nothing at all.

II. Probity is not less necessary to Pastors than Knowledg and Ability; and this Probity ought to have three degrees.

I. The first is, that Pastors give no ill Example, and that their Life be blameless. This is the first Qualification which *St. Paul* requires in those who aspire to this holy Office. \* *Let a Bishop*, says he, *be blameless*; that is, his Manners ought to be such that he may not

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\* 1 Tim. III. Tit. I.

justly be charg'd with any Vice, or give any Scandal. Then the Apostle specifies the faults from which a Pastor ought to be free:

*Not given to Wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy Lucre, but patient; not a brawler, not covetous, one that ruleth well his own House, having his Children in subjection with all gravity, and who is not lifted up with Pride and Self-conceit.*

Every body knows how much might be said, if the Conduct of Clergymen was to be examin'd upon all these Heads. Are not many of them scandalous by the irregularity of their Manners? How gross and shameful soever the Sin of Drunkenness may be, yet do they never commit it; and is not this Vice very common among them in some Countries? Are not some of them furious and passionate in their Actions and Words? Do we never observe in them a sordid Covetousness, and an excessive study of self-Interest? Are their Families always well order'd? Are not Positiveness and Pride very remarkable in some Persons of that Profession? Is there not often just cause to complain, that they are implacable in their hatred, that they have little Charity; and that there is less Prepossession, and more of Gentleness and true Zeal to be found among Laymen, than among Divines? I say nothing of some other Faults which are not less scandalous in Churchmen; as when they are given to Swearing, when they are dissolute and undecently free in their Words,

Y                      when



**Part II.** when they are wedded to Divertisements and Pleasures, Worldly-minded, Lazy, Crafty, Unjust and Censorious.

When such Vices appear in the Lives of Clergymen, it is the greatest of Scandals; from that minute the Gospel becomes of no effect in their Mouths, the Laws of God are trampled upon, the most sacred things are no longer respected, Divine Worship and the Sacraments are profan'd, the Ministry grows vile, Religion in general falls under Contempt; and the People being no longer curb'd by the Reverence due to it, give up themselves to an intire Licentiousness. I confess that Christians ought to follow the Doctrine rather than the Example of their Guides, and that it is possible to profit by the Instructions of a Man, who does not practise what he teaches. But every body has not discretion and firmness enough, to separate thus the Doctrine from the Example, and not to be shaken by the Scandal occasion'd by Churchmen, when their Lives and their Preaching contradict each other. Men are very much taken with Out-sides, and govern themselves more by Imitation than Reason. A great many Persons want nothing but Pretexts and Excuses, to justify them in ill things; and there is no pretence more specious, than that which the ill Lives of the Ministers of Religion affords. When the People see Men who are incessantly speaking of God and recommending Piety, and yet do not practise themselves what they preach,

preach, they reject all that comes from them, they fancy that the Gospel is preached only for form sake, and that the Maxims of Religion may be safely violated. Cause III.

2. But St. Paul requires somewhat more in Pastors, than not to be scandalous; this is but the first and the lowest degree of Probity. He would have them besides to be adorn'd with all manner of Vertues; \* *To be vigilant, prudent, grave, modest, and given to Hospitality, gentle, charitable, lovers of good Men, wise, just, holy and chaste, shewing themselves in all things patterns of good Works, of Purity, Gravity and Integrity.* And indeed Pastors are not only appointed to instruct and govern their Flocks, but they are oblig'd besides to set them a good Example, and to be their Patterns; and they do not edify less by their good Examples, than by their Exhortations. The purity of their Manners, and the regularity of their Conduct give a great weight to all the Functions of their Ministry; these make their Persons venerable, and engage a great many to imitate them. Now whether these Qualifications are to be found in Pastors, every body may judg. I except those who ought to be excepted; but for the generality, wherein do Churchmen differ from other men? Do they distinguish themselves by a regular and exemplary Life? Their Exterior indeed is something different, they live more retir'd, they preserve a little Decorum, tho even this

\* 1 Tim. III: 6c. Tit. I. and II.

Part II. is not done by all ; but as for the rest, are they not as much addicted to the World, and taken up with earthly things ? have they not as many human and secular Views ? are they not as much wedded to Interest and other Passions as the bulk of Christians are ?

3. This second degree of Probity is not sufficient. The Life of a Hypocrite may be blameless, and even edifying ; by composing his Exterior he may pass for a Saint. There is therefore a third Degree, and that is the rectitude of the Heart, a good Conscience, a great measure of true Piety, Devotion, Humility and Zeal. Pastors ought to be in private, inwardly and in the sight of God, what they appear to other Men. And certainly none can have greater Inducements to Piety, than a Man whose ordinary business it is to meditate upon Religion, to speak of it to others, to reprove Hypocrisy and Vice ; to perform Divine Service, to administer the Sacraments, to visit afflicted and dying People ; and to give an account to God of a great number of Souls. I do not know whether there is a higher Degree of Impiety and Hypocrisy, than when a Man who is in these Circumstances is not a good Man. Such a Man makes but sport with the most sacred things in Religion ; he does properly play the part of a Comedian, and of a Hypocrite all his Life. No Profession damns more certainly, than that of a Churchman, when it is thus exercised.

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It may perhaps be said, that all these Moralities are nothing to my purpose; that this third degree of Probity is necessary only for the Salvation of Pastors in particular; and that as the People are unacquainted with the inward Dispositions of their Teachers, and are not able to distinguish true from counterfeit Piety, it is enough for their Edification, that the Exterior should be well regulated. But those who think thus, are very much mistaken. This want of Piety and Devotion is capital; and here we find the main Cause of the remissness of Pastors, and of the Corruption of the People. From whence do those Faults proceed which we have observ'd in Clergymen? How comes it to pass that some of them are ignorant and lazy, that others apply themselves to unprofitable Subjects and Studies, that others preach only out of Vanity, and that their Discourses are languid and jejune? All this is because their Hearts are void of Devotion and Piety.

There are some preaching Matters, and those too the most edifying, which can never be well manag'd, but by a Man animated with sincere Piety. Those Preachers who describe the beauty of Virtue, or the happy state of a good Conscience, the hopes of another Life, or the necessity of working out one's Salvation, and who are not affected and pierc'd thro with what they say, do but stammer about these things; and they will hardly excite those Motions in other



**Part II.** mens Hearts, which they never felt in their own. We cannot preach with Success without knowing the heart of Man; and this Knowledge ought to be the chief Study of those who preach the Gospel. But the surest and the most compendious way to know man's Heart aright, is to consult our own, to reflect upon our selves, and to have a spotless Conscience: Without this a Man is still a Novice and a Bungler in Preaching. And so in the exercise of Discipline; in private Exhortations, in the visiting of the Sick, in Prayers, and in all other Pastoral Functions, there is still something defective, when a Man does not perform them out of a Principle of Charity, but only to discharge the outward Obligations which his Office lays upon him.

Pious and good Churchmen, who are not on the other hand destitute of Gifts, fulfil much better the Duties of their Ministry. A Pastor who loves his Profession, who lays the Functions of it to heart, who is thorowly convinc'd of the Truths of Religion, and who practises the Rules of it; who in private humbles himself before God, and ardently implores his Blessing; who is ever intent upon seeking means to edify the Church; who turns all his Meditation that way; who thinks day and night of the necessities of his Flock, must needs be successful; he has in himself the Principle of all Benedictions and happy Success. When he is speaking or exhorting, it is his Heart that speaks,

speaks, and the Language of the Heart has a kind of Eloquence and Persuasiveness in it, which is soon discern'd by the Hearers, and which always raises a pious and a zealous Preacher, above a mercenary and hypocritical one. The want of Piety in Pastors, is therefore the principal Source of the Faults they commit, and of the mischiefs which proceed from their Remissness.

Whosoever will seriously and without Prejudice consider all that I have now said, must own, That the Cause of the Corruption of Christians is chiefly to be found in the Clergy. I do not mean to speak here of all Churchmen indifferently. We must do right to some who distinguish themselves by their Talents, their Zeal, and the Holiness of their Lives. But the number of these is not considerable enough to stop the Course of those Disorders which are occasion'd in the Church by the vast multitudes of remiss and corrupt Pastors. These pull down what the others endeavour to build up. Some perhaps will ask, Whence do all these Faults of the Clergy proceed? In answer to this Question, I have three things to say.

1. It ought not to be thought strange, that Pastors should not fulfil all the Obligations of their Office. As things are constituted almost every where, with relation to Discipline, to the Inspection and Authority over private Persons, to the visiting of the Sick, and to some other parts of their Employment, they cannot if they would dis-

**Part II.** charge their Duties: Neither the Magistrates nor the People would suffer it. On the other hand, the defects of Pastors are the Consequences of the Contempt and Abasement which their Office is brought under, as well as of the Poverty they live in. This Contempt and Poverty discourage a great many, who might otherwise considerably edify the Church; and they are the Cause why multitudes, who have neither Education, nor Talents, nor Estates, dedicate themselves to the Ministry of the Gospel. It is commonly imagin'd, that all sorts of Persons are good enough for the Church: and whereas the *Jews* did offer their most excellent things to God; among Christians, what is least valued is consecrated to God and the Church. Some are devoted to the holiest and the most exalted of all Professions, who would not be thought capable of an Employment of any consideration in the Commonwealth. If then we intend to remedy the Faults of the Clergy, we should begin with redressing what is defective in the State of the Church and Religion in general.

2. Many Ecclesiasticks fail in the Duties of their Calling, because they do not know what it obliges them to; and this they do not know, because it was never taught them. There are indeed Schools, Academies and Universities, which are design'd to instruct those young Men, who aspire to this Profession; but I cannot tell whether Schools and Academies, as they are order'd

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young People live there licentiously, and are left to their own conduct. The Care of Masters and Professors does not extend to the regulating of the manners of their Disciples. And this disorder is so great, that in several Universities of *Europe*, the Scholars and Students make publick profession of Dissoluteness. They not only live there irregularly, but they have Privileges, which give them a right to commit with impunity, all manner of Insolencies, Brutalities and Scandals, and which exempt them from the Magistrates Jurisdiction. It is a shame to Christianity, that Princes and Churchmen should not have yet abolish'd those Customs and Establishments, which smell so rank of the ignorance and barbarism of the Heathens. And yet these Universities are the Nurseries out of which Pastors, Doctors and Professors are taken. Those Scholars who neither have Birth, nor sense of Vertue or Honour, and who have spent their Youth in Licentiousness and Debauchery, spread themselves into all Churches, and become the Depositories, and in some measure the Arbitrators of Religion.

As to the Studies which are pursued at Universities, I observe in them these two Faults. The first relates to the method of Teaching. Divinity is treated there, and the Holy Scripture explain'd in a Scholastical, and altogether Speculative manner. Common Places are read, which are full of  
School-



**Part II.** *School-Terms, and of Questions not very material.* There young Men learn to dispute upon every thing, and to resolve all Religion into Controversies. Now this method ruins them, it gives them intricate and false Notions of Divinity, and it begets in them Dispositions directly opposite to those which are necessary to find out Truth.

The other Fault is more essential. Little or no care is taken in Academies, to teach those who dedicate themselves to the Service of the Church, several things, the knowledge of which would be very necessary to them. The Study of History and of Church Antiquity, is neglected there.

Hence it is that most Divines may be compared with People, who having never travelled, know no other Customs or ways of living but those which obtain in their Countries. As soon as you take these Divines out of their common-places, they are in a maze, and every thing seems new and singular to them. Morality is not taught in Divinity-Schools, but in a superficial and scholastick manner; and in many Academies it is not taught at all. They seldom speak there of Discipline, they give few or no Instructions concerning the manner of exercising the Pastoral Care, or of governing the Church. So that the greater part of those who are admitted into this Office, enter into it without knowing wherein it consists; all the Notion they have of it, is, that it is a Profession, which obliges them to preach, and to explain

explain Texts. It were therefore to be wished, that for the Glory of God, and the good of the Church, Schools and Universities should be reform'd, and that the Manners and Studies of young People should be better regulated in those places. This Reformation would not be impossible, if Divines and Professors would use their Endeavours about it. But those kind of Establishments are not easily alter'd. The ordinary method is continu'd, and things are done as they were of old, because Men are willing to keep their Places, and the Stipends which are annex'd to them.

3. The third and principal Remedy would be to use greater Caution, than is commonly done, when Men are to be admitted into Ecclesiastical Offices. The first Qualification to which, according to *St. Paul*, regard is to be had, is Probity and Integrity of Life. The Persons therefore who offer themselves, should in the first place be examin'd in relation to Manners, and to all those moral Dispositions, which *St. Paul* requires in them; and those should be excluded in whom they are not found. But this Article is commonly slubbered over, and a young Man must have been very dissolute, if he is refused upon the account of Immorality. So that the most sacred of all Characters is confer'd upon many Persons, who according to the Divine Laws ought to be rejected.

The other part of the Examination of Candidates, relates to their Ability and Talents.

Now

**Part II.** Now in order to judg of their Capacity, it is not enough to enquire whether they know their common-place-Book, or whether they can make a Sermon; it would be necessary besides to examine them about the Fundamentals of Religion, about History, Discipline, the holy Scripture and Morality. All these are important Matters, the knowledg of which is of daily use with reference to Practice, and in the exercise of the Sacred Ministry. But they are not insisted upon. The Examination turns upon some Trials about Preaching, and upon some Heads of Divinity which are scholastically handled, by Arguments and Distinctions: After which if the Candidate has satisfy'd in some measure, Ordination follows.

Now when such insufficient Persons are once admitted, the mischief is done, and there is no remedy. These Men are afterwards appointed Pastors in Churches, where for 30 or 40 Years they destroy more than they edify. How many Churches are there thus ill provided, where the People live in gross Ignorance, where the Youth are lost for want of Instruction, and where a thousand Crimes are committed? The Cause of all this Evil is in the Ordination of Pastors.

It will no doubt be objected, that if none were to be admitted but those who have all the necessary Qualifications, there would not be a sufficient number of Pastors for all the Churches. To which I answer, that tho' this should happen, yet it were better to run  
into

into this Inconvenience than to break the express Laws of God. A small number of select Pastors is to be prefer'd before a multitude of unworthy Labourers. We are still to do what God commands, and to leave the Event to Providence. But after all, this scarcity of Pastors is not so much to be fear'd. Such a strictness will only discourage those, who would never have been useful in the Church, and it is a thing highly commendable to dishearten such Persons: But this exactness will encourage those, who are able to do well, and the Ministry will be so much the more esteem'd and sought after.

Cause  
IV.

## C A U S E IV.

*The Defects of Christian Princes and Magistrates.*

**I**F it had been possible, without an essential Omission, not to have detected this Cause of Corruption, I would have pass'd it over in silence. We ought not to speak of the higher Powers, but with great discretion and respect: And therefore it is not without some kind of reluctancy, that I suppose in the Title of this Chapter, that one of the Causes of Corruption is to be found in Christian Princes and Magistrates. But if I had suppress'd this, I should have dissembled a most important Truth, and omitted



Part II. ted one of the Heads, which are the most necessary to be insisted on in a work of this Nature. By reason of the Rank which Princes and Magistrates hold, they have always a great share in the good or ill manners of the People. And so I cannot excuse myself from shewing, that the Corruption of Christians may partly be imputed to those who are ordain'd for the Government of Civil Society. In order to this I shall offer some Reflections upon the Duty of Princes and Magistrates, consider'd, 1. As Civil, and 2. As Christian Magistrates.

Altho the Institution of Princes and Magistrates does properly relate to civil Matters; yet the manner of governing their People, has a great influence upon the Things of Religion. This cannot be question'd, if we suppose this Principle; That God who is the Author of Religion, is also the Author of civil Society and Magistracy. It is St. Paul's Doctrine, \* *That there is no Power but of God, and that the Powers that be are ordain'd of God.* If God is the Author of Religion, and of civil Society, he is also the Author of those Laws upon which both Religion and Civil Society are founded. Now God being always consistent with himself, the Laws which are deriv'd from him, cannot contradict one another; and this shews already not only that there is no opposition between Religion and Civil Society, but that these two things have besides a ne-

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\* Rom. XIII. 1.

cessary relation to one another. This will Cause  
 yet more clearly appear, if we consider that IV.  
 Religion does not cut off Christians from the Society of other Men, and that the Church does not constitute a State by it self, to have nothing to do with Civil Society; but that those who are Members of the Church, are likewise Members of civil Society, so that the same Man is at the same time both a Christian and a Citizen.

But it is chiefly necessary to consider the Nature of the Christian Religion. 1. It was to be preach'd to all Men, and to be receiv'd by all the World, without distinction of Nations, Kingdoms, or States. In order to this, two things were necessary. First, that there should be nothing in Religion, contrary to the natural Constitution of States and of civil Society. For else, God by ordering the Gospel to be preach'd, would have destroy'd his own work, Christianity could not have taken footing in the World, and the first Christians would have been justly look'd upon as seditious Persons. But it is not less necessary on the other hand, that there should be nothing repugnant to the Christian Religion, in the natural Constitution of States and civil Society; otherwise God by establishing Society, would have put an insuperable Obstacle to the planting of the Gospel, unless the civil Order and Government had been alter'd. But our Saviour has assur'd us that there was to be no such thing, by declaring  
 that

Part II. \* *that his Kingdom was not of this World,*  
 and by commanding his Followers, † *to render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.*

2. One of the chief Precepts of the Christian Religion is, || *That all Men should obey and be subject to the higher Powers.* Now this Precept could not possibly be observ'd, if in the natural Establishment of Civil Society, there was something incompatible with the Profession of Christianity. \*\* *No Man can serve two Masters,* when they command contrary things. But St. Paul goes further, he tells us that the preservation of Kings, and the submitting to their Authority is a mean for Christians †† *to lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all godliness and honesty.*

3. It is remarkable, that whatever is good and just in the Civil, is so likewise in the Religious Society; and that whatever is prescrib'd by Religion is just, and even beneficial to civil Society. The Law of Nature, which is the Foundation of civil Laws, is confirm'd by the Christian Religion, and does perfectly agree with the Principles and Morals of the Gospel. An evident proof of this is, that when Christian Emperors and Lawgivers did set about the making of Laws and Constitutions, they retain'd the essential parts of the Laws and Constitutions receiv'd among the *Romans* and the *Greeks* in the time of Heathenism. And to this day the

\* John XVIII. † Mat. XXII. || Rom. XIII.

\*\* Mat. VI. †† 1 Tim. II. 2.

old *Roman* Law is follow'd among Christians, except some Laws which have been alter'd or abrogated, either because they were contrary to natural Justice and Equity, or else were not of a general and necessary Use.

4. It is certain, that Religion and Civil Society do mutually support ore another, when both are well regulated. Religion contributes to the Happiness of Society, by rendering the Authority of Princes more sacred and inviolable; and the good Order of Society contributes to the Welfare and the Progress of Religion. Let us suppose a Magistrate who loves Piety and Justice; 'tis plain, that at the same time he promotes the Interest of Religion, he strengthens the Welfare of Society, and that he cannot procure the good of Society without advancing the Interest of Religion. If we suppose, on the other hand, a Magistrate who does not act by the Principles of Religion and Justice, it is visible, that by suffering Religion to be violated or despis'd, he shakes the surest Foundation of his own Authority, and of publick Tranquillity; and that by failing in the Duties of his Office, and in the exercise of Justice, he makes the People grow vicious, and neglect the Duties of Piety.

From these Considerations it does manifestly appear, that Princes and Magistrates may either procure great Advantages to Religion, or do it a considerable Prejudice; and that they are in part the Authors of the Corruption which reigns in the World.



## Part II.

When Civil Society is well govern'd, Men are dispos'd by that very thing to practise the Duties of Christianity. In proportion as the People are well order'd, they are more tractable and susceptible of the Impressions of Piety. As they are us'd to be govern'd by the Laws of the Magistrate, they do the more easily submit to the holy Discipline of Christ; yea, and by obeying Civil Laws, they do already discharge some part of the Duties of Religion. But when Princes and Magistrates, either through Ignorance, or want of Probity and Vertue, give way to the violation of Justice and good Order, it is impossible but that Religion must suffer by it: for, besides that the People cannot break the Civil Laws, without violating the Principles of Religion; how can they perform the Duties of Christianity, when they do not discharge those of Nature? It is very hard to persuade People to the observation of the Precepts of the Gospel, who do not submit to the Laws of natural Reason and Justice. It is not to be expected that Men, who do not order their outward Actions aright, should regulate their Thoughts and resist their Passions; or that being strangers to the first Elements of Vertue, they should come up to the practice of the most sublime Precepts of Christian Morals.

Besides, the want of Order in the Administration of Justice and Government draws after it all kinds of Disorders with relation to Manners; such as Dishonesty, and what is  
most

most dangerous, a Spirit of Libertinism and Independence, which makes Men untoward and refractory to good Discipline. We are to observe here, that the greatest part of mens Lives are taken up with Civil matters. All Persons are bound to obey the Magistrate, and few are altogether free from Law Suits and Business; so that when the People are not well govern'd with relation to Civil things, they do so accustom themselves to live without Rule or Restraint, that Religion can no longer have any Power over them: The neglect and remissness of Princes and Magistrates occasion all this Mischief.

But if the bare Carelesness of Magistrates is so fatal to Society, how must it be when they themselves are vicious and unjust, either in their own particular Conduct, or in the Exercise of their Office? The greatest Unhappiness that can befall any People, is, when those invested with the Supreme Authority favour Injustice and Vice; it may be said then, that the publick Fountains are poison'd. The whole State is order'd by the Sovereigns; they are those from whom the Laws receive their Force, who appoint Judges and Magistrates, and who regulate the Administration of Justice. When inferior Magistrates prevaricate, this may be remedy'd by the Sovereign; but when the Sovereign himself fails in his Duty, no redress can be expected.

Not but that subordinate Officers and Magistrates may likewise occasion a great deal

**Part II.** of Mischief. If we suppose in a Province, or a Town, Magistrates and Judges who want Integrity, who consult only their Profit and Interest in the exercise of their Offices, who are not proof against Bribes, who administer Justice from a principle of Covetousness or Passion, who act by Recommendation or Favour, and who are full of Artifice and Dissimulation. This is enough to introduce and authorize Wickedness thro-out their whole Jurisdiction, to pervert Right, to banish Justice and Honesty from all Courts, to make way for Knavery and Litigiousness, for the protracting of Suits, the abuse and violation of Oaths, and many other Disorders. Then it is that Vice is in fashion and repute, that Vertue and Innocency are oppress'd, and that the People grow corrupt. Now all this being a direct undermining of Religion and Piety, let any body judg, whether I have not reason to say, that the Corruption of the Age may be imputed to Princes or Magistrates.

But all these Evils are yet more unavoidable, when the Princes or Magistrates who are the Authors of them, profess the Christian Religion. A Heathen Magistrate has not by much that influence upon Religion and Manners, that a Christian has. The Church was purer and more separated from the World, when the Superior Powers were contrary to it; but as soon as the Emperors had embrac'd Christianity, Piety and Zeal did visibly decay. Not but that Religion may receive, and has actually receiv'd great Helps from Christian Magi-

**Magistrates;** they have sometimes contributed very effectually to the promoting of Piety, and those who do so, deserve immortal Honour. But it must likewise be granted, that the Vices and ill Examples of Christian Magistrates, corrupt the Church more, than if it were under Heathen Governors. Cause IV.

The Duty of Christian Princes and Magistrates, as well as of all the Members of the Church, is double. They are bound, first, to serve God, and to discharge the Obligations which Religion lays upon all Men; and Secondly, to take care, that God may be serv'd and honour'd by all those, who are subject to their Authority.

1. Every Christian ought to serve God, and to live according to the Precepts of the Gospel. That very thing then, *that a Magistrate is Christian*, obliges him to be a lover of Piety and Vertue. It is a common Notion especially among great Men, that Piety and Devotion do not become those who are exalted to Dignities, and that publick Persons are not to be rul'd by the Maxims of Religion. But whosoever maintains this Opinion, must deny the Principles of Religion, and be either an Atheist or a Deist. For supposing the Truth of Christianity, 'tis beyond all doubt, that a Christian Prince or Magistrate, has as much need of Piety as other Men. He is bound to be a good Man by the same duty and interest, which engage private Men to be so; he has a Soul to be sav'd as well as they; and as he is a publick Person, he is to give an account



Part II, count of his conduct to that Judg, with whom there is no acception of Persons, and before whom the greatest of Monarchs is no more than the meanest of Slaves.

If the eminent Station of a Magistrate makes some difference between him and Christians of a lower Order, that difference obliges him to a higher degree of Piety. The Character he bears requires a great stock of Vertue. No small measure of Probity is requisite to acquit himself worthily in that Calling; to do no Injustice, not to seek in his Dignities the means to gratify his Interest, his Vanity, his Pride, or his other Passions. Without a firm and solid Vertue he cannot withstand those Temptations which offer every minute, and which are the more dangerous and subtle, because in those exalted Posts, ill things, for the most part, may be done with safety. If we add to all this, that an ill Magistrate is answerable for the greatest part of the Disorders which happen, and of the Crimes which are committed in Society, it must be confess'd that Magistracy is a kind of Life wherein Piety is very necessary, and in which great Circumspection and a sublime Vertue are the only Preservatives against a thousand Opportunities of transgressing the Duties of Conscience, and violating the most sacred Laws of Religion and Justice.

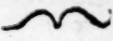
II. It is the Duty of Christian Princes and Magistrates, to labour for the promoting of Vertue, and the suppressing of Vice among Men. We have shewn already that it is their  
interest

interest to do so, since Religion is the surest Cause Foundation of their Authority, and of the Fidelity of their People; but their Duty does besides indispensably oblige them to this. It cannot be deny'd but this Obligation lies upon them, since every Christian is bound to advance the Kingdom of Christ, and to edify his Neighbours as much as he can in that State and Condition he is in. The Duty here is answerable to the Ability; so that we may apply to this purpose that Maxim of the Gospel, \* *that to whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be requir'd.* Private Men cannot do much towards promoting the Glory of God, their Zeal and good Intentions are for the most part useless, it is not in their power to hinder general Disorders; this ought therefore to be done by Men of Authority, and they may do it easily. Besides, a Christian Magistrate is to consider that it was Providence which rais'd him to the Post he is in, and that by consequence he is engag'd in Justice and Gratitude to use his Authority for the Glory of God. Lastly, Would it not be a strange thing that Christian Princes and Magistrates should do no service to Religion, when Kings and Princes, who are not Christians, can do so much hurt to it? Now they may advance the Kingdom of God and banish Corruptions, these two ways: 1. By their Example. 2. By their Care.

1. By their Example. This Method is of great efficacy. Examples are very forcible, but

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\* Luke XII. 48.

Part II.  their Effect depends for the most part upon the Quality and Character of the Persons they come from. It has been made appear, in the foregoing Chapter, how much benefit redounds to the Church from the good Lives and Examples of the Governors of it: But the example of Kings, Princes and Magistrates, is in some respects of greater weight. When a Churchman recommends Vertue by an exemplary Life, it is often said that his Profession obliges him to live so; and this consideration makes his Example to be of little force upon worldly-minded Men: But when Princes and Magistrates are pious, those Men have no such thing to say. The Splendor and Authority which surround Greatness, gives much credit to every thing that comes from great Men: They may sometimes do more good with one Word, than a Preacher can do by many Sermons.

I have shew'd in the first Part of this Work, that one of the greatest Obstacles to Piety is a false Shame, which restrains Men from doing their Duty, for fear of being observ'd and despis'd; and I am to shew hereafter, that Custom has introduc'd among Christians a great many Maxims and Practices contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel. These two things occasion Corruption; and till they are remedied, Vice and Impiety must still reign. But the Example of great Men is sufficient to remove almost intirely both these Causes of Corruption: They are the Judges of Honour and Custom; it is in their power to make any thing, which

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is reputed shameful, to be thought honourable, and to abolish that which is generally received. So that how scarce and despis'd soever Piety may be, an Idea of Honour would be affix'd to it, if it was favour'd and profess'd by great Men; and that would be respected in them, which in others is look'd upon with Indifference or Contempt. Cause IV. ~~~~~

That which has happen'd with relation to Duels, is a strong proof of what I say. To decline fighting a Duel, has been thought for a long time a Disgrace and an Infamy: A false notion of Honour did then bear down the strongest Principles of Nature, Reason and Christianity, and drive Men to that Excess of Brutality and Madness, that they would cut one another's Throat for a Trifle: But in those places where Christian Princes have abolish'd Duels, People are now of another mind, and think it no shame to refuse a Challenge. And thus Swearing, Drunkenness, and the greatest of other clamorous Sins, might be suppress'd, if great men pleas'd. Is it not observ'd besides, that when a Prince is devout, Devotion comes into fashion? It may be that this Devotion, which proceeds from the Example of Princes, is not always sincere; but at least it regulates Manners as to the exterior; and such an outward Reformation may be a step toward true Devotion: However, this shews that the Opinion and Example of Men in Authority has a great power. And surely, if by their credit they can make Vice it self to be honour'd, would it



Part II. it not be much easier for them to make other  
 Men honour Vertue, since it is honourable  
 in its own nature?

I am not able to exprefs of what Consequence the Example of great Men is, either for Good or Evil. A Prince, who is vicious, cruel, dissolute, artificiois or unjust, is enough to infect a whole State in a very little time, to banish Piety from it, and to bring into repute Drunkenness, Leudness, Cheating, Indevotion, and all the other Vices which he allows himself in. This we find by daily experience: Such as the Prince is, so are those about him; and from these the Evil spreads upon the whole People, by reason of the Credit and Authority to which they were rais'd, and of the Influence they have upon publick and private Affairs. What might not be said here of the Life which is led in the Courts of Princes, excepting some few Courts where Licentiousness is not suffer'd? That kind of Life, which is follow'd at Court for the generality, agrees little with the Spirit of Christianity. People live there altogether in a loose and worldly manner, in Luxury, Idleness, Pomp and Pleasure: There the strongest and the most enticing Temptations are to be met with; and the most criminal Intrigues, Adultery it self, are rather a matter of Rallery than Reproach. It is almost impossible for a Man to insinuate himself into the Favour of Princes, and to advance his Fortune at Court, unless he makes it his Maxim

him to dissemble his Sentiments, and to speak directly against his own Thoughts. The worst of it is, that from thence Corruption diffuses it self almost every where; so that many Disorders, which are in vogue, would be unknown, or at least very rare in the World, if they had not been introduc'd by that Licentiousness which reigns in the Courts of Princes.

I come now to the Endeavours which Christian Magistrates ought to use for the Edification of the Church, and the reviving of Piety; these Endeavours relate either to Civil matters, or to Religion.

1. In Civil matters, it is their Duty to restrain Libertinism and Corruption, by regulating the Manners of their Subjects, either by repealing the Laws and Customs which do not agree with Religion, and which engage the People into the Violation of the Precepts of the Gospel, or by reforming the Abuses which are introduc'd from time to time, particularly those which creep into the Administration of Justice. In relation to all these things, there are several Faults which the Church cannot provide against, and which nothing can remedy but the Magistrate's Authority.

2. The other Care relates directly to Religion. 1. Princes and Kings, professing Christianity, are bound to procure, as much as in them lies, the Welfare of the Church. They ought to set about the establishing of Truth and Peace, provided that in order to that

**Part II.** that they use no means but such as are suitable to the Gospel. They ought, by their Authority, to see that the Church and Religion want nothing that is necessary for the maintaining of Order and Decency; that Divine Service be duly perform'd; that there be both Places for that purpose, and a sufficient number of Persons to take care of the Edification of the Church; that those Persons may subsist honourably; that they do their Duty, and keep themselves within the Bounds of their Calling: They must not suffer Church-Goods or Revenues to be apply'd to Uses merely Civil; and when these Revenues are not sufficient, it becomes their Piety and Justice to allot some part of the publick Revenues for the Necessities of the Church. In fine, as to Manners, I observ'd before, that they may easily give a stop to Vice and Impiety, to Luxury, Swearing and other Scandals which dishonour the Church. And if they can do this, they ought to do it, every Christian being bound to do all that's in his power to promote the Glory of God.

2. It is certain, that Magistrates who are Members of the Church, ought to protect it, to maintain the Order which God has establish'd in it, and not to suffer any breach to be made there. So that tho they may regulate many things which concern Religion, and tho the Church owes them a great Regard, yet they cannot, without Usurpation and Injustice, arrogate to themselves the whole Authority, with

with relation to Ecclesiastical Affairs. They Cause  
 are neither the Princes nor the Heads of IV.  
 the Church, as they are the Princes and  
 the Heads of Civil Society. An Authority  
 superior to theirs has instituted Religion,  
 Pastors and Discipline. There is a Law e-  
 nacted by the KING of Kings, and the  
 Head of the Church, which clearly deter-  
 mines the Rights and Duties both of the  
 Church and of the Governor of it: All these  
 are sacred things, which earthly Powers are  
 not to meddle with. They are Laws which  
 Princes and Magistrates did submit to, when  
 they became Members of the Church: with  
 respect to these (I mean still essential things  
 appointed by the Word of God) they have  
 acquir'd no Right by embracing Christiani-  
 ty; since he who becomes a Member of a So-  
 ciety, cannot by that acquire a Right to al-  
 ter the natural Form and Constitution of it.

The Instance of the Kings of *Judah* shews  
 that a Prince, who professes true Religion,  
 may interpose in the Affairs of it: But we  
 must take care not to carry this Instance too  
 far, as those do who ascribe to the Magi-  
 strate a supreme Authority in the Church;  
 who allow him a Right to order every thing  
 there, not excepting Discipline, the calling of  
 Pastors, nor even the Articles of Faith. For  
 besides that under the Law, Kings were by  
 no means the Judges of every thing which  
 concern'd Religion; we are not to argue al-  
 together about the Christian Religion from  
 what was done in the Jewish Church. A-  
 mong



**Part II.** among the Jews the Church and the State were mix'd together, and in some measure undistinguish'd from one another: That merely spiritual Society, which is call'd the Church, and which is confin'd to no State or People, or any particular Form of Civil Government, was properly erected since the Coming of Christ. God acted among the Jews as a Civil Magistrate. The Laws of the Jewish Religion were for the most part external Laws, which might and ought to be maintain'd by Force and Authority. The Rights of Divine Service, and the Functions of Priests were very different from the Evangelical Worship, and from the Office of Christian Pastors. After all, if we should go by the practice of the Jewish Church, it would follow, that the Ministers of Religion are invested with Civil Authority, and a very great Authority too. The Jewish Priests held a considerable Rank in the State as well as in Religion. If upon some occasions Kings have depos'd Priests, upon other occasions \* Priests have oppos'd Kings, and alter'd the Government.

So that without pressing too much those Instances out of the Old Testament, the best way is to consult the New, and to proceed according to the Laws of the Apostles, and the Nature of the Christian Religion. And whosoever examines, without prejudice, those sacred Books which have been writ since the Coming of our Saviour, will ac-

\* See 2 Chron. XXIII. and XXVI.

knowledg, that things are now alter'd, and Cause  
that Magistrates have but a limited Autho- IV.  
rity in matters of Religion. 'Tis remar-  
kable that the Scripture never mentions  
them, when it speaks of the Church, and  
of the Government of it.

3. And yet as the Authority of Princes  
and Magistrates is deriv'd from God, it  
ought still to subsist entire; and therefore  
they have an unquestionable Right to take  
care, that nothing be done in the Church to  
the prejudice of their lawful Authority, and  
of publick Tranquillity; and that the Mini-  
sters of Religion do not stretch their Autho-  
rity beyond spiritual things. The Honour  
and the Safety of Religion require that this  
Principle should be laid down; for Reli-  
gion, as was said before, ought not to dis-  
turb Society, and true Religion will never  
disturb it. If then any Christians or  
Churchmen, under pretence of Religion,  
should break in upon the Civil Government  
and the publick Peace, Kings and Princes  
have a Right to restrain them; and then  
they do not oppose Religion, but those only  
who abuse and dishonour it.

After these Considerations, I think any  
man is able to judg, whether the Decay of  
Piety and Religion is not in part to be im-  
puted to Christian Princes and Magistrates.  
We need but enquire, whether both in Civil  
and Religious matters they observe the Du-  
ties I have now describ'd. I say no more of  
this, because every body is able to make the  
Application.

But

**Part II.**

But I must add, that if the want of Zeal in Magistrates is enough to introduce Confusion and Vice into the Church, the Mischief is much greater, when not only they do not what they ought for the Good of Religion, but when they use their Authority besides to the prejudice of it. I cannot forbear mentioning here two great Abuses.

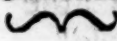
7. The first is, when Princes and Magistrates assume the whole Authority, so that, except Preaching and administering the Sacraments, they will do every thing in the Church; when they presume to determine Articles of Faith, to rule the Consciences of their Subjects, and to force 'em to embrace one Persuasion rather than another; when they will by all means take upon 'em to call Pastors, without regard to that Right of the Church and Churchmen which is establish'd in Scripture, and confirm'd by the practice of the first Ages of Christianity; when they seize upon Church-Estates, tho there is no reason to fear that Wealth should corrupt their Clergy, and tho such Revenues might be apply'd to several pious Uses, and particularly to the Relief of Country Churches, most of which are not sufficiently edify'd for want of necessary Endowments and Funds. A great deal might be said about that which was done in the last Century with relation to Church-Revenues; and it were to be wish'd that People had been a little more scrupulous, when they invaded the Possessions of the Church, and confounded them with the Revenues of the State.

Be-

Besides this, the Magistrate's Authority is fatal to the Church, when he hinders the exercise of true Discipline, and substitutes such Regulations as he thinks fit in the room of Apostolical Laws. This is one of the greatest Obstructions to the restoring of Apostolical Discipline. Tho the Church and her Pastors should be willing to observe the antient Order, and to oppose Corruption by those means which the Gospel enjoins, yet this is not to be done, if such as have the Authority in their hands will not give way to it. The Church is not in a condition to resist, and to make head against the Magistrate when he uses Force; and she ought not to do it if she could.

The second Abuse is, when the Magistrate makes it his business to abase Religion, in the Persons of its Ministers, by despoiling them, as much as he can, of every thing that might procure them Respect and Authority in the Church. This Policy is as contrary to the Interest of Religion, and to the promoting of Piety, as it is common now-a-days in several Christian Dominions. It is well done of the Magistrate to preserve his Authority, and to keep the Clergy from exceeding the bounds of their Calling; but it does not thence follow that he ought to trample them under foot, to bring them under a general Contempt, and to vilify their Character, which after all is sacred and venerable. This is to sacrifice Religion to Policy and Pride, and this proceeding



**Part II.**  ceeding is a manifest Cause of the Contempt of Religion, and of the Corruption which necessarily follows that Contempt, since commonly nothing is more despis'd in the World, than that which great Men despise.

I declare it once more, by all that has been said, I do not mean to detract any thing from the Respect due to Civil Powers; neither do I speak of all Christian Princes and Magistrates, among whom there are some who have Piety and Zeal, and who labour with success for the Good of Religion: But the Glory of God requires that we should speak the Truth, so that I could not but take notice of this Cause of Corruption. Upon the whole, it's to be hop'd, that if Christian Magistrates would make serious Reflections upon all these things, we should soon see an end of some of these Disorders; and that a happier time will come when they will use their Authority to advance the Honour of God, and to restore Truth, Piety and Peace among Christians.

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## C A U S E V.

### E D U C A T I O N.

**N**othing is more natural than to look for the Original of Corruption in the time at which it begins, I mean in the first years of Life. It is not only when Men have attain'd to a ripeness of Age, that they are inclin'd

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clin'd to Vice, but that Inclination discovers Cause  
it self from their Youth. The Root of that V.  
Ignorance, of those Prejudices, and of the  
greatest part of the ill Dispositions they are  
in, may be found in their tender years. We  
had need then look back on the beginnings  
of Life, and seek in Youth, and in Infancy  
it self, the Source of Corruption.

When we enter on this Inquiry, and consider that Men, if nothing restrains them, will run into Vice from their Youth, out of a propension common to all, we cannot but perceive, at first sight, that there must be in them a certain Principle of Corruption, which makes them thus prone to ill things: But if we reflect on this Matter with any attention, we may likewise be satisfy'd, that it would not be impossible to rectify, at least in part, that vicious Inclination, and to prevent the fatal Consequences of it by the means of Education; and that it is chiefly the wrong Method of educating Children, which feeds that Disposition to Evil, and which increases and strengthens it. This is what I intend to shew in this Chapter. I hope to make it clearly appear, that the Corruption of Men is to be imputed to the Education they had in their Youth; and that considering how Children are brought up, 'tis impossible but Ignorance and Vice must generally prevail in the World. I shall begin with general Reflections on the Education of Children, and then speak of their Education, with a particular regard to Religion and Piety.

## Part II.

My first Reflection is, that the World consists mostly of such as have no Education, and whose unhappiness it is to have been wholly neglected in their Youth. This may particularly be observ'd among Persons of mean Birth. Every body knows that such kind of People have no manner of Education; that from their Childhood they are abandon'd to themselves, without either Instruction, Correction, or any other Help; and that living with ignorant, gross and vicious Parents, between worldly Business and ill Examples, they spend their Youth almost like Brutes.

This first Reflection, which may be apply'd to many thousand Christians, discovers already a plain reason of the extreme Corruption which appears in their Manners. We wonder sometimes that Men are so deprav'd, and that great Multitudes have almost no Sense at all, either of Religion or Conscience, or of Reason and Humanity. We think it strange, that there should be among Christians impious Persons, Blasphemers of the Name of God, Thieves, Poisoners, Men who defile themselves with the most infamous Sins, and who make conscience of nothing. One would think human Nature were not capable of such Enormities; and yet they are committed by a great many. But we may easily apprehend how this comes to pass, if we consider what Education those Persons had; instead of being brought up like Christians, they have not so much

much as been educated like rational Creatures. The Light of Nature has been extinguish'd in 'em from their very Infancy; so that having scarce any Notion of Good or Evil, they give up themselves to Vice without scruple or remorse, almost in the same manner as the Heathens did of old.

II. But as this total Defect of Education is not universal, so we are to enquire, in the second place, how Children are bred up; and to observe here the principal Faults committed about their Education.

1. The Education of Children is not begun soon enough, nothing is done to them in the first Years of their Lives. As soon as Children begin to have some kind of Reason, the first Principles of Vertue should be instil'd into 'em. For tho the Ideas and Actions of young Children are very confus'd, yet it is in Infancy that Passions and Habits begin to spring up. At 3 or 4 Years old, Children give some signs of what they are to be all their Lives; from that time it may be known what their predominant Inclinations will be. If that time was well improv'd, it would be an easy and compendious way to give Children a good Education. They may then with ease be made to do those things, which they cannot be brought to without much time and difficulty, when once come to 14 or 15. Some little Care and gentle Correction may stifle a Passion in its birth; it may cure Anger and Stubbornness in a Child, it may soften his Inclinations, and



Part II. make him obedient and towardly: A little caution us'd about his Diet may render him sober and temperate all his Life. But that time which is so precious, is that wherein Children are most neglected.

This delay of Education proceeds from two Causes. (1.) That Men have not a true Notion of the Education of Children, and of the End to be aim'd at in it. It is commonly imagin'd, that the breeding up of Children is the teaching 'em Latin, learning a Trade, or some other things usually taught 'em, in order to fit 'em for those Callings to which they are design'd. And as Children are not capable of applying themselves to Arts and Sciences before a certain Age, so their Education is defer'd till then. But if Men well understood, that the chief design of Education is to form the Judgment and Temper of Children, they would not stay so long before they took care of 'em.

(2.) The first Years of Children are neglected, and their Conduct then is not much minded, because Vice does not then shew it self in all its Deformity. All they do is then look'd upon as innocent, and every thing appears pleasant, not excepting their very Faults. If they are too lively, or of a resolute Humour; if they happen to be in a Passion, to lye, to speak undecent and filthy Words, to do little sly naughty Tricks; all this, for the most part, makes People only laugh and commend them. It is not consider'd that these are the Forerunners of Vice,  
and

and that these beginnings call for a speedy remedy. Young Children are not capable of Crimes: Impiety, Uncleanneſs, Cruelty and premeditated Malice are not to be found in them; but if we narrowly obſerve 'em, we may ſpy out the Seeds and Buddings of thoſe Vices in their Actions and Manners. This is not much taken notice of; Paſſions and ill Habits are ſuffer'd to grow quietly during Childhood, and they are quite form'd and ſettl'd before they are obſerv'd. At ſeven or eight Years of Age, Innocency is already loſt, and the Heart is corrupted. People begin to think of educating their Children when the fitteſt ſeaſon for Education is paſt, and they have already thoſe Principles of Corruption in them, which they will never ſhake off.

2. There is no care taken to form the Mind and Judgment of Children. Reason being the moſt eſſential Property of Men, is what ought to be chiefly cultivated in young People; and all they are taught beſides is of little uſe, if they are not accuſtom'd to this. Great Labour is uſ'd to teach them Languages and Sciences; their Memory is exerciſ'd, they are loaded with ſeveral Inſtructions, their Heads are fill'd with a multitude of Words and Ideas: but it would be without compariſon more important to cultivate their Judgment. Whatever they may be deſign'd for, no greater good can be procur'd 'em, than to make 'em able to paſs a ſound Judgment upon Things, and to govern

**Part II.** themselves by Reason. True Sense is necessary at all times, and it is of a general usefulness in our whole Life. It is therefore unhappy for Children, that in this respect they are so much neglected. Men have not the patience to reason with 'em, and to teach 'em to speak and to act wisely. They are suffer'd to be among People who can neither speak nor reason; they converse for the most part, only with Servants or other Children. By this means they are us'd to take up false Notions, to judg of Things only by their appearances, to resolve rashly and without consideration, and to be govern'd only by their Senses, Passions, or Prejudices. From thence proceed almost all the Faults they commit afterwards; this is especially the Cause of that affection which Men bear to Sin, and to the Things of this World. The first Quality of a Christian, is to be a rational Man; it being impossible that a Man, who cannot make use of his Reason, and who has no Sense, should judg aright of spiritual Things, curb his Passions, renounce his Prejudices, and constantly follow the Rules of his Duty.

3. I shall not here enumerate all the particular Faults which are suffer'd in Children; but there are two I must take notice of, because I account them the cause of most of the Passions and Vices to which Men are addicted. First there are no sufficient endeavours us'd to make Children tractable, and to subject them to the Will of others. The ground-work of a good Education is to keep them

them in Awe and Obedience, and not to let them grow independent and obstinate in their own Will and Passions; so that when we command or forbid 'em a thing, it is by all means necessary to make 'em obey. When we observe in 'em too strong an Inclination to any thing, tho the thing were innocent, yet because they desire it too earnestly, they are not always to be indulg'd in it: But care is to be taken, that when we cross their Will, we do it with mildness, and in such a manner, that they may see it is with reason and for their good we oppose 'em, and not out of humour, or only to vex 'em. When Children are thus dealt with, they may be turn'd which way we please. It keeps 'em from Stubbornness and Self-love; it teaches 'em to overcome their Desires, to submit to Correction, and to follow the Advice given 'em. In a word, Tractableness in a Child is a disposition to every thing good, and the Foundation of all Vertues: But no good can be expected from a Child who is not docile and obedient. If he is permitted, while young, to be independent, and to do what he lists, he will be much more absolute when he comes to a riper Age.

The other Fault which 'tis very necessary to prevent, is the love of the Body and of the Objects of Sense. A carnal Temper is, by the testimony of Scripture it self, the root of all Vices. But the first rise of that irregular affection, which Men bear to every thing that gratifies their Body, is in their Infancy.

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For,



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For,

**Part II.** For, besides that Children govern themselves only by Sense; that bias they have towards sensible things, is fortify'd by the sensual Education bestow'd upon 'em. None but gross and material Objects are propos'd to them; they are entertain'd only with those things which affect the Senses, and no Ideas but those of bodily Pleasures or Pains are excited in 'em. The Promises and Threats, the Rewards and Punishments, us'd to gain upon 'em, relate only to corporeal things. And here it ought not to be omitted, that they are chiefly spoil'd by being indulg'd in Gluttony, and Vanity of Clothes. These are the two first Passions of Children; the two Inclinations by which they begin to grow corrupt, and to love the World: nothing makes so much impression upon them as that which affects their Eyes or their Palate.

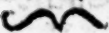
If Children were us'd to a simplicity of Diet and Apparel, this would preserve 'em from many dangerous Vices and Passions; it would dispose 'em for those Vertues which are most necessary to a wise Man and a Christian; it would inure 'em to Sobriety, Labour, Prudence, Humility, to the contempt of Pleasure, and to Firmness and Patience in Calamities. This would make their Constitution stronger, and prevent divers Infirmities, which both afflict and shorten their Lives. But ill Custom prevails against the Maxims of Reason and Christianity. Little Caution is us'd in relation to their Diet; they are suffer'd to eat much beyond what Nature requires,



quires, and they are accustom'd to be liquo-  
rish and dainty in their eating. As for Clothes  
and Decking, Parents, especially Mothers,  
have that Weakness, that they love to see  
their Children fine and spruce. Besides, the  
way of breeding up Children of the better  
fort, makes them soft, effeminate, and lovers  
of Pleasure. The fruit of such an Education  
is, that Children become Slaves to their Bo-  
dies and to their Senses; they are taken with  
nothing but bodily Pleasures and worldly  
Things. From thence spring, in process of  
time, Intemperance, Uncleaness, Pride,  
Covetousness, and most of the greater kind  
of Sins. This is likewise the principal cause  
of Indevotion, and of the little relish which  
Men find in spiritual Things, particularly in  
Religion and Piety. A sensual Education  
occasions all these Evils.

4. It will not be improper to observe here,  
That frequently the Education given to those  
Children, who are destin'd to Sciences and  
considerable Employments, either in the  
Church or in Civil Society, does but corrupt  
their Inclinations. They are sent to Col-  
leges and Universities, where being trusted  
with themselves, they live in Independence  
and Libertinism; and they are sent at an  
Age, in which without a kind of Miracle,  
they cannot fail of being undone. They are  
as it were emancipated from the inspection  
of their Parents; they are expos'd without  
defence to the most dangerous Seductions,  
and that at the very time when they are the  
most



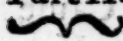
**Part II.**  most unfit to regulate their Conduct, and the most susceptible of ill Impressions and vicious Examples. Children would be much better educated with relation both to Sciences and good Manners, if their Parents did not make so much haste, and if they did not spur them on to study, till their Judgment was a little form'd, and especially if they took care to confirm them in the Principles of Religion and Vertue before they were sent from home. Some alteration should likewise be made in Colleges; For the very Studies which Youths pursue there, are instrumental to debauch them: They learn Latin and Obscenity together: Authors are put into their hands, the reading of whom raises impure Ideas in their minds; and as if there was a design to stifle in 'em all sense of Modesty, they are made to interpret and rehearse very indecent things. When all is well consider'd, young People acquire but little useful Learning in Colleges and Academies, at the rate they live and study in those Places; and there too they commonly leave their Innocency.

5. The means of procuring for Children a happy Education, are not us'd as they should be. These Means are Instruction, Encouragement, and Correction.

Instruction is very much neglected, as I shall particularly shew when I come to speak of the Education of Youth with reference to Religion. Parents seldom give good Directions to their Children, to teach 'em how they ought to live: They do worse,  
they

they train 'em up to ill things, and give 'em Cause  
bad Instructions. By the Discourse and V.  
Maxims they utter in their Childrens hearing, they infuse Sentiments and Principles of Covetousness, Pride, Sensuality and Dissimulation into 'em; they teach 'em to act on the Motives of Interest and Passion, or by the Notions of a false Honour. Nay, they sometimes directly teach 'em Vice, they encourage 'em to lye and cheat, to be revengeful and passionate; so that young People are not only destitute of good Instructions, but they are infected from their Infancy with several most pernicious Principles. I need not say what the Consequences of such an Education are like to be.

If few Children are form'd to Vertue by Instruction, few are made vertuous by the good Example of their Parents. It is much if this Example be not bad and dangerous. In most Families, Children see nothing that favours of Christianity, except some external Acts of Religion; they observe that every one is imploy'd about temporal things; the Discourses they hear turn altogether upon Interest, or some trifling Subject. They are Witnesses of a great many Disorders, of the Heats and Quarrels of their Parents, of their Avarice, Swearing, Lying, Intemperance, Impiety, and their want of Respect for Religion. These are the Examples which, for the most part, Children have before their Eyes, and which corrupt them more than any thing else. At that Age almost

**Part II.**  most every thing is done by Imitation and Example; and no Example makes more Impression upon 'em than the Example of their Parents, because it is always in sight; and they think besides, that they cannot do amiss, as long as they copy after it.

It is very useful in educating Children, to encourage them. I mean not only that they should be exhorted and incited to their Duty, and that from the Motives of Honour, and from the Pleasure that attends the doing of it; but that likewise we should express our Satisfaction, and our Love and Esteem of 'em, when they do as we would have 'em. A word of Praise, a little Reward, inspires new Ardour into them. We may do what we please with Children, when we can prevail upon 'em with gentle Methods, and win their Love: They then accustom themselves betimes to do their Duty, out of Inclination, and from noble and generous Views: But to use always Severity towards Children, and to take no notice of their Endeavours to do well, is the way to discourage them, and to extinguish in 'em the love of Vertue.

Yet Severity is necessary, and upon some occasions we ought not to forbear Rigour and Correction. Those indulgent Parents who, being restrain'd by a false Tenderneſs, cannot find in their heart to chastise their Children, do infallibly ruin them. But if the want of Correction and Discipline makes Children unruly; Chastisement ill dispens'd

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produces the same effect. There are commonly three Faults committed in the correcting of Children.

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The First relates to the Cause for which they are chastis'd. Correction should not be us'd but for those Faults, which have something of Vice in them; as when Children are guilty of Malice, of some ill Habit, or of great Negligence: and even then we should not proceed to Chastisement, till we have try'd other ways to no purpose. But this Rule is little observ'd: Children are punish'd for all sorts of Faults indifferently, and very often for small ones. They will sometimes be severely chastis'd because they cannot say their Lesson without book, or for some other little disorder they have done in the House, thro Imprudence and without Malice; and at the same time Faults against Piety and good Manners shall be pass'd over. These Corrections produce several ill effects, and especially this, that Children form to themselves false Notions of their Duty; they fancy that the Faults for which they are punish'd are the most considerable, and that there is more hurt in spoiling their Clothes, or in missing a word of their Lesson, than in lying, or in praying without attention, which lessons in them the abhorrence of Vice.

The second Error, which relates to the Nature of the Correction inflicted on Children, is, when no other Chastisements are us'd but what make the Body smart. Such Corrections without doubt are useful and necessary,

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**Part II.** necessary, because Children are chiefly mov'd by those things which strike the Senses; but they are not the only ones to which recourse is to be had. To beat Children every time they do amiss, is to use 'em like Beasts. There are other ways of punishing and mortifying 'em. The most profitable Corrections are those, which excite Sorrow and Shame for the ill they have done.

Lastly, There is an Error in the chastising of Children, when they are not corrected with Discretion and Gentleness. Prudence and even Justice requires, that regard should be had to the nature of their Fault, to the Disposition they are in, and to other Circumstances; and it becomes that Love which a Father owes his Children, to correct them with Lenity and Moderation, and to forbear excessive Severities. Children should perceive the Tenderness of their Parents even in their Corrections, and be made sensible that it is with Reluctancy, and only in order to their Good, that they treat 'em with some Rigour. If Chastisements were dispens'd with these Cautions, they would, at the same time they cause Pain, beget in Children a Sorrow for having done amiss, and that would make them love their Parents, even while they are punishing 'em. But for the most part Parents, or those who have Authority over Children, chastise 'em without Discretion, and with a Rigour which borders upon Cruelty; they punish 'em rather out of Passion, Spite or Revenge, than upon

upon wise and sober Consideration. Such a proceeding discourages and provokes Children, and makes 'em hate their Duty. I confess this method may strike Terror into 'em, and curb 'em a little; but they grow the more stout and incorrigible by it, and they will certainly run into Licentiousness as soon as they are no longer restrain'd by the fear of Punishment.

From what has been said, it is plain, that Mens Corruption is a consequence of the Education they had in their Youth: But this will yet more evidently appear by the Reflections I am going to make upon the way of bringing up Children in Religion and Piety.

We are here to consider Education, in reference to the two Ends of it, which are the educating of Youth, First in the Knowledg, and then in the Practice of Religion.

I. The Considerations to be insisted on, concerning the first Head, relate either to the things which Children are to be instructed in, or to the manner of instructing 'em.

1. As to the things themselves, there are two Articles upon which the Instruction of Youth ought to depend; and those are the Truths, and the Duties of Religion.

The chief Rule to be observ'd, with relation to the Truths of Religion, is, to insist on those which are most necessary, and to give a distinct Notion of them to Children. And here two Faults are committed; the first is, when they are not instructed in all Truths which are to be known in order to

Part II. be a Christian; the second is, when such Instructions are propos'd as are unfutable to their Age, or even useless.

To explain my meaning a little further; I say first, that there are some essential things which Children are not at all, or but imperfectly taught: Among these we may reckon the knowledg of Sacred History. Religion being founded on History and Facts, 'tis requisite that Instruction should begin at the Historical part of Religion, and at the main Events related both in the Old and New Testament: So that Children might know, at least in general, the principal Ages of the World, and the most remarkable things which happen'd from the Creation to the coming of our Saviour; what the Flood was; the *Egyptian* and *Babylonish* Captivities; what time *Moses*, *David*, the Patriarchs and Prophets liv'd in; what the Heathens and Jews were, and what kind of Life our Saviour led.

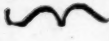
It must not be said that History is above the Capacity of Children; for, on the contrary, it is to them the easiest part of Religion, which they hearken to with the greatest pleasure, and remember best. •Nothing more smoothly enters into their minds than History; all the things I have now mention'd may be taught 'em in a week. And this Knowledg is as necessary, as 'tis easily acquir'd. A Man can never understand his Religion well, or be thorowly convinc'd of its Truth, if he does not know the Facts it supposes.

supposes. We see it was by the means of Cause  
History that God chose to instruct Man- V.  
kind, and that matters of Fact make up the  
most considerable part of the Sacred Wri-  
tings. It is strange therefore that in Cate-  
chisms, and other Instructions given to  
Youth, History should be so little insisted  
on. This is visibly one of the Causes of  
that profound Ignorance in which the grea-  
test part of Christians live, and the reason  
why they understand almost nothing of  
what they read or hear in Sermons, and  
why the Doctrines they are taught make so  
little impression on 'em.


Teaching Children History, gives 'em be-  
forehand some Notions of the Truths and  
Doctrines of Christianity; but yet these  
Truths and Doctrines ought to be propos'd  
separately, that they may have a more dis-  
tinct apprehension of 'em. Above all, great  
care should be taken to imprint on the  
Minds of those who are to be instructed, the  
knowledg and belief of the Principles of  
Christianity. But this likewise is not done  
as it should be. In Catechisms, as well as  
in Sermons, particular Truths are dwelt  
upon, and the general ones are touch'd only  
by the by: which is a Fault I observ'd in  
the beginning of this Work.

Now at the same time that Children are  
suffer'd to be ignorant about many impor-  
tant Articles, they are perplex'd with di-  
vers useless, or not very necessary Instruc-  
tions. Instead of limiting 'em to the esser-



Part II.  tial parts of Religion, their Minds and Memories are fill'd with many things which they may safely be ignorant of. Some would have 'em understand the Disputes of Divines, concerning the most curious and abstruse Questions; and they are made to get several things by heart, which they do not understand, and which are of no great use. In the mean time Children learn these things, and say 'em without book; and being possess'd with the conceit that they are so many Articles of Faith, they rank among Divine Truths School-Terms and Doctrines, of which they neither apprehend the Certainty nor the Use. And thus having none but intricate Ideas about Religion, they perceive not the Beauty, Solidity, or Excellence of it; and they have neither true Love nor Respect for it.

When Children are once instructed in the Truths of Christianity, it is particularly necessary to acquaint 'em with the Duties of it. There are two distinct sorts of Duties in Religion. First those concerning Divine Worship or Service; and then the Duties of Morality. The first are Adoration, the Honour paid to God, Prayer and Thanksgiving: But as these Duties may be perform'd either outwardly or inwardly; it is of very great moment to make Children apprehend, that Prayer, and all other Acts of Divine Worship, ought to proceed from the Heart; that *God will be serv'd in Spirit and in Truth*; and that without this the Worship paid

paid to him, either in private or in publick, Cause  
does only provoke his Displeasure. It is V.  
not enough therefore to tell Children, that   
they must pray to God or go to Church, and  
to teach 'em some Forms of Prayer to be  
said at certain Times: All this is external;  
and if we go no farther, if we do not care-  
fully inform 'em that true Worship is inter-  
nal and spiritual, we shall make 'em but  
Hypocrites, by teaching 'em to pray and  
perform religious Acts. The Faults then  
committed in this Point, are of great mo-  
ment; and we may easily perceive that  
Hypocrisy and Indevotion are the Conse-  
quences of this Negligence. The Religion  
of most Christians consists only in some ex-  
ternal Actions; they think they have done  
their Duty when they have recited some  
Prayers, or been present at the publick  
Worship, tho in all they do they have nei-  
ther Attention nor Elevation of Heart. This  
Error, which is so capital, and yet so com-  
mon, arises chiefly from hence, that Chil-  
dren are form'd only to a mere outside De-  
votion and Worship.

Young People are not much better in-  
structed in moral Duties. I shall not enter  
here upon all the Considerations which the  
Subject might afford, because I have treated  
of the want of Instruction concerning Mo-  
rals in several places of this Treatise, and  
particularly in the 1st Chapter of the first  
Part: Yet I must say, that this Defect pro-  
ceeds from the Instructions given to Youth.

Part II. Much greater Care is taken to inform 'em about the Doctrines, than about the Duties of Christianity. The Articles of the Creed, the Questions concerning the Sacraments, and the other Points of Doctrine, are handled and examin'd largely enough in Catechisms, and Controversy is not forgot; but the Ten Commandments are explain'd in so short and superficial a manner, that we do not find there so much as the Names of a great many Vices, Vertues and Duties. Children, who should be rais'd up to Christian Perfection, are only taught the Ten Commandments: and from the Explication given of these, they gather that they should not be Idolaters, Blasphemers or profane Persons; that they should neither commit Murder nor Adultery, nor steal, or bear false Witness. But how many other Duties are there of which they have no manner of Notion? They are not taught what it is to be gentle, humble, sincere, charitable, pure, sober and patient. Many Persons, because never instructed in these Vertues which are the principal Ornaments of a Christian, do not practise, or so much as know them. We are to impute to these slight and defective Instructions, that Opinion commonly receiv'd, that whoever is free from those six or seven great Sins forbidden in the Decalogue, is a good Man.

2. The Success of Instructions depends upon the method and way of Teaching; which, on the one hand, should be clear and  
propor-

proportion'd to the Age and Capacity of Children, and on the other, should be delightful and fit to make 'em love Religion. By this, two Ends, which ought to be aim'd at, will be attain'd, the Mind will be enlighten'd, and the Heart mov'd. What is clear informs the Mind, and what is delightful wins the Heart, and inspires into it a strong Affection for Religion, and for the Duties of it.

1. Perspicuity is never more necessary than in the instructing of Youth. Children having no Ideas of most things, and not being us'd to the signification of words, cannot understand what is said, unless it be deliver'd with much clearness and simplicity, and every thing be avoided which may puzzle or seem obscure to 'em. This Perspicuity results, First, from the things that are taught. 'Tis a certain Truth, that whatsoever is essential in Religion, is always clear and easy to be understood ; and on the contrary, whatsoever is obscure and difficult, is not very necessary : So that, provided Instruction goes no further than essential Doctrines and Duties, it cannot be very hard for Children to apprehend what is said. Secondly, Clear Expressions, and plain and popular ways of speaking, produce distinct Ideas in the Minds of those who are instructed ; but a dark or too high a Style, figurative or learned Phrases, spoil the Fruit of Instructions. Lastly, Order and Method contribute mightily to Clearness. 'Tis not fit that Children



**Part II.** should be loaded at first with many Doctrines and Precepts : General Instructions, the Principles of Religion, and the simplest Ideas, ought to go foremost ; and then particular Instructions and more complex Ideas may be propos'd ; but still with a due regard to the Age, Capacity and Progress of Children.

2. Instruction is to be deliver'd in a delightful manner. This is the way to insinuate our selves into the Minds of Children. Nothing wins more upon them than a sweet and pleasant way of speaking, and nothing gives 'em so much disgust as roughness and severity. If Religion was represented with an attractive Aspect, they would certainly embrace it with eagerness: But for the most part, those who teach or speak to 'em of Religion, do it with an Air of Severity and a dismal Tone, and with those Circumstances which make 'em averse to it. Commands, Threatnings and Constraint are us'd to make them take their Catechisms, or say their Prayers ; if they fail, their Teachers are angry, and beat 'em. When we exhort 'em to Piety, instead of doing it with such Gentleness as might make Vertue amiable to 'em, we speak in a harsh and chiding manner. The Effect is, that Children seeing nothing in Religion that is enticing, take up a prejudice against it ; they look upon that Instruction, to which they are compel'd, as a hard piece of Labour and Drudgery. Religion is no sooner mention'd, but it damps

damps their good humour; they do nothing but by Constraint, and against their Will; they free themselves from that Constraint as soon as they can, and bear during their whole Life an aversion, or at least an indifference to Religion.

II. I have been discoursing hitherto of what relates to the Knowledge of Religion; and I hope I have clearly proved, that generally speaking, Children are ill instructed. I am now to consider Education with relation to Practice. For it would be to no purpose, to infuse into young People a perfect Knowledge of the Truths and Duties of Religion, if they were not taught to make a good use of that Knowledge, and to direct it to its true End, which is the Practice of Vertue and Piety. But it is seldom that the Care of Parents, and of those who have the instructing of Children, goes so far. If they take some care about their Instruction, they generally neglect 'em as to the practical Part, and they little enquire whether they live according to the Precepts of Religion. Now Instructions thus dispensed not only prove useless, but may likewise make Children doubly wicked, and fill 'em with the most dangerous Prejudices. When Children observe that Religion is proposed, only in an Historical and Speculative manner; that provided they remember what is told 'em, and are able to give an account of it, they are commended for being well skill'd in Religion; and as for the rest, they are permitted

**Part II.** ted to live as they please, and are not chid, tho they do not practise what they were taught: they conclude from all this, that Religion consists wholly in the Knowledg and Profession of certain Truths, and that it is not absolutely necessary to frame their Lives according to the Rules of the Gospel. They accustom themselves besides to slight their Knowledg, and to act against the Principles of their Consciences. These pernicious Sentiments are infus'd into Children, when Instructions are not directed to Practice. To prevent so great an Evil, these Rules are to be observed.

1. The design of proposing the Truths and Doctrines of Christianity to Children, should be to beget in 'em a love and respect for 'em; and in order to that, we should let 'em see their Certainty, their Importance, and their Use. It ought then to be carefully inculcated to 'em, that there is nothing more true and certain, nothing of greater Importance, or that concerns us nearer than Religion; and that in comparison with it, all that we see in the World is of very little or no Consequence; and lastly, that it was revealed for no other End, but to make us good, and to conduct us to the highest Blessedness. By this Method, Instruction will always terminate in Practice. By teaching Children to know God, we shall excite in them a Love and Reverence towards the Supreme Being. By speaking to 'em of Providence, we shall make 'em apprehend that  
God

God sees every thing, and what reason we have to depend upon, and to fear him. By telling 'em the History of the Bible, we shall make 'em observe in those various Events, the effects of God's Wisdom, Goodness, Power and Justice. In explaining the Doctrine of the Sacraments, we shall chiefly apply our selves to make 'em understand what these sacred Ceremonies oblige Christians to, what an August and Venerable thing Baptism is, and what Purity is requir'd in those who are baptiz'd. And so when we speak to Children of Christ and his Sufferings, of the Resurrection and a future Judgment, of the Punishments and Rewards of another Life, and of all other Truths, we should do it in such a manner as may stir them up to Piety and Holiness.

2. In the next place we ought to engage Children to the Practice and Observation of the Duties of Christianity, with relation both to Worship and Manners. And first it is altogether necessary, to teach 'em to render to God the Worship that is due to him. There are few Christian Families, where something is not done with this Intention. Children are made to learn some Prayers, to say them Mornings and Evenings, and to be present at the publick and private exercises of Piety. But the main should be, to bring 'em to sincerity in divine Service, lest they fall into Impiety and Hypocrisy. The greatest endeavour should be to accustom them to pray with Attention and Reverence. This may



**Part II.** may at first seem difficult; we neither see the Heart of Children, nor can regulate the motions of it. But yet I think there are ways to fix their Minds, which might be successfully us'd: And I hope my Readers will not think it amiss if I dwell a little upon this Head, considering the importance of it.

1. I would not have Children pray, before they have some knowledg of what they are doing. There is a Custom establish'd every where, which I look upon as the first Cause of Indevotion: and that is, to make little Children recite Prayers, and long ones too. I do not apprehend the use of this, nor where the inconvenience would be, if Children did not pray at an Age when they can hardly speak an articulate Word. It would be time enough to make them pray, when they are capable of some Reflection. If we did wait till then, they might pray with Attention; and, I make no doubt, but they would do it with Pleasure and Reverence. Children think it an Honour to do what is done by Men. If therefore they were not permitted to pray till they came to a certain Age, they would look upon praying as a particular Privilege: but when they are made to pray before they have any sense of what they do, it puts this Notion into their heads, that Praying is nothing but reciting of Prayers: And besides, the Obligation laid upon them to perform regularly a Duty, of which they do not yet understand the Necessity or the Use, makes 'em observe it only out of Custom.

2. I

2. I could wish that when we begin to Cause  
make Children pray, we should teach 'em V.  
plain and short Prayers, wherein they might  
say nothing but what they understood. Two  
or three Sentences are enough in those begin-  
nings; and as they grow in Years, longer  
Prayers may be prescrib'd 'em. Brevity is  
to every body a help to Devotion; but Chil-  
dren being not capable of a long attention,  
it is certain, that long Prayers are not at all  
fit for 'em.

3. It would be very useful to discourse  
with 'em about the Excellency and Necessity  
of Prayer, and to make 'em apprehend what  
an Honour it is for us to speak to God, and  
to lay open our Necessities before him.

4. In order to accustom Children to look  
upon Prayer with Reverence, and to go  
about it with Seriousness; they should not  
be allow'd to pray when they are strongly  
possessed with some Passion, or Object, or  
when they have committed a considerable  
Fault against Piety.

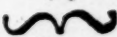
5. It is particularly necessary to regulate  
and observe their behaviour and looks, while  
they are at Prayers; and then likewise to  
express a Reverence our selves, and to say  
or do nothing that may give 'em any di-  
straction. It is a Custom as bad, as it is or-  
dinary in Families, to go to and fro, to be  
busy and to talk all the while that Children  
are saying their Prayers. How is it possible  
that amidst all that noise, which would even  
hinder older People to pray as they ought,  
Children,

**Part II.** Children, whose Thoughts are so rambling, should not be distracted? And what Reverence can be expected from them about the Exercises of Piety, when their Fathers and Mothers who are present shew none at all? This is what I have to observe concerning Prayer, which is the principal part of Divine Worship.

As to what concerns the Duties of Morality, particular care ought to be taken, to make Children observe 'em. The first mean to be us'd next to Instruction, is to exhort 'em to the practice of Vertue, and to represent to 'em, that Piety and Holiness are the essential Characters of a Christian. But the Exhortations directed to 'em will have no great effect, if they are not dispensed with Prudence. Sometimes Parents spoil all, tho they mean well. They exhort and chide at every turn, they are perpetually admonishing and moralizing; by this they give a disgust to their Children, instead of winning upon 'em. Exhortations ought to be accompanied with Discretion and Gentleness: above all, we should endeavour to persuade and prevail upon Children by Reason; that so being convinc'd of the Justice, Beauty and Usefulness of Vertue, they might practise it of their own accord, out of Inclination and with Pleasure.

That we may be able to exhort Children as is fitting, it is requisite to be well acquainted with their Temper, and to observe which are their predominant Inclinations; that

that if those Inclinations are good, they may be cultivated, and if bad corrected. And it is easy to know the Temper of Children, because they deal ingenuously, and have not yet learn'd the art of Dissembling. If Men did make this their Study, if they took hold of the good Disposition which may be in Children, if they apply'd themselves to oppose the predominant Faults, to which either their Age or their Constitution inclines 'em; they would preserve 'em from many Vices, and make 'em great Proficients in Vertue.

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Besides this, Parents either by themselves or others, ought to watch over the Conduct of their Children, and to inquire strictly whether they practise the Lessons given them, whether they are afraid of doing ill things, whether they forbear those Faults for which they have been reprov'd, whether they resist those vicious Inclinations, whether they are gentle, sober, humble and moderate in their Discourses, Actions, and Behaviour. To this end, it is very proper, that they should not have too much liberty, but be for the most part under the Eye of some wise Persons, who may observe their Deportment. I do not enlarge on these Considerations, because they would carry me too far; neither do I speak here of Encouragement, Correction, and Example, nor of some other Means which might be usefully taken for regulating the conduct of Children, because these have been spoken to already.

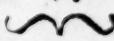
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## Part II.

There is ground enough to conclude from what has been said, that Corruption proceeds primarily and chiefly from the ill Education of Youth. The ordinary Education of Children being not Christian, what wonder is it, that true Christianity and solid Vertue should be so scarce? The first Impressions are the strongest. The Principles imbibed in the first Years of Life, do not wear out afterwards; and those who had not a good Education, are not often known to be wise and regular in their Conduct.

Let it not be objected here, what many are wont to alledg upon this Subject, That the Errors of Education are not so considerable, but that they may be corrected afterwards, and that Wisdom comes with Years. Thus those Men reason who only examine things superficially; but such Persons did never seriously reflect upon Man's Temper, upon the manner how ill habits are formed, or upon Experience. Almost all good or ill Habits begin in Infancy, and grow stronger afterwards. The Age which succeeds Youth, is so far from supplying the Defects of Education, that on the contrary, the longer a Man lives, the more difficult it is for him to return to Vertue, if he did not set out well at first. For besides, that Habits are then stronger and deeper rooted, Business does also come with Age, and People have no longer that leisure and freedom, which they had when they were young. Those therefore who do not take right Measures early, and

and lanch into the World with ill Principles, Cause  
are still growing worse instead of amending. V.  
This is verified by daily experience. Age   
seldom alters Men for the better.

I do not deny; but that People who were neglected in their Infancy, or whose Youth has been unruly, are sometimes known to change their Manners and their Conduct, when come to a riper Age. But we are to consider how this change happens, and what the Nature of it is. In some it is a thorow change, and a sincere return to Vertue. God sometimes works Conversion in the greatest Sinners; and he does this commonly by Afflictions, Sickneses and Pains. But such kinds of Conversion are not very frequent. The Change that we think we observe both in our selves and others, is not always sincere; it is often no more than an effect of Age, of the State we are in, or of Custom.

Age does two things; it deadens the Passions, and it changes them. In the heat of Youth, Passions are violent, and make a great stir; when the prime of Life is over, a Man perhaps is no longer a Libertine or a Debohee; but his Exterior only is reform'd. The same Principle of Corruption remains in his Heart. He that was Sensual and given to Leudness, moderates himself; but still his Heart and Imaginations are defiled. He that was Profane and Impious, does no longer profess Libertinism openly, he practises some Duties of Religion. But for all that

Part II. he has no more Devotion or Faith than before. Age likewise changes Mens Passions and Inclinations. Young People have their Passions: and supposing these should abate about Forty or Fifty, or that they should be quite left off, which seldom happens; there are other Passions which succeed those of Youth, and work the stronger, because not so much mistrusted, and because they make less noise, and are hid under the pretence of a lawful Calling. Thus we often see that Libertines and Debauchees end with Ambition and Covetousness. The World calls the change observ'd in those Men, Conversion and Amendment. A Man is said to be reclaim'd from the Errors of his younger Days, when his Conduct is no longer scandalous, or manifestly criminal; but if he is free from the Faults of his Youth, he is guilty of others, which he had not then. He is no longer Dissolute, but he is a Slave to Ambition, he is Covetous, Unjust, and wedded to the World more than ever. Nay, all things considered, he is worse than he was in his Youth; since he has run from one Vice into another, and loaded himself with the Sins of the several Stages of Life. We are not to imagine, that every alteration which Age makes in mens Conduct and Manners is a true Conversion.

The various States, Callings, and Professions of Men, do likewise put many upon altering their way of Living, and make 'em give over those Excesses to which they have been

been addicted for some time. As soon as a Man comes to be the Master of a Family, or to be preferr'd to Places, he must necessarily grow more regular in his Conduct, and forsake several Disorders which he allow'd himself in before. He becomes more serious, he applies himself closer to labour, he lives more retir'd, and takes leave of the Amusements of Youth. Honour, Decency, Interest, the necessity of making a Family, and other Considerations oblige him to this; but Religion has not always a share in this Change.

Lastly, a Habit of Sinning does often blind and harden Men to that degree, that they imagine there is a sincere Amendment, when there is none at all; nay when they are more corrupt than when they were young. Men at first are sensible of their Faults, Conscience checks 'em for the sins they commit: but in process of time they perceive them no more; Conscience grows seared, and they sin without being aware of it. Habits seldom fail to produce this Effect, of which we see a thousand Instances in old Sinners.

All this shews, that the Foundations of the Conduct of our whole Lives are laid in Youth, and that the chief reason why Men live ill, is because they have not been well educated.

I do not think it necessary to mention the Remedies of this cause of Corruption: I have observ'd 'em all along, in shewing the Faults committed in the Education of Youth: I shall only add, before I dismiss the Subject, that all this properly concerns Masters of Families and Pastors.



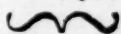
## Part II.

It were therefore to be wished, in the first place, that Parents would take more care in breeding their Children, and proceed by the Rules of Reason and Religion. They are mistaken if they think themselves excus'd from this Obligation, which both Nature and Piety lay upon them, and which cannot be neglected without Sin. The Carelessness of Parents in this Point, may very justly be wonder'd at; the Education of their Children is generally what they mind the least; and the reason is, because they are void of Religion and Piety themselves.

Next, It would be requisite that Pastors should discharge their Duty with relation to young People, and that to this end in all Places and Churches, the necessary Order and Method were establish'd for instructing the People, particularly Children. I remark this, because in this respect things are not well order'd, so that in many Places such helps and means are much wanting. It is well known, that the opportunities of Instruction and the helps to Piety are mighty scarce in the Country and in Villages: Schools are there manag'd at a very ordinary rate, and many places have no School at all, whereby it happens that many Persons cannot so much as read. There likewise, Divine Service is but seldom performed, and very carelessly too. The Ministers appointed in those Places, are generally either of little worth, or Men who do not watch over their Flocks as they ought, but are remiss  
in

in the Exercise of their Office. These are the essential Defects to be remedied, by those who have Authority in Church or State.

Cause  
V.



Above all, it is requisite that Churchmen should have a strict inspection over Schools and Families, and that Catechizings were more frequent than they are. Young People ought to be the chief objects of the care of Pastors; no part of their Office is more useful, or rewards their Labours with better success. Their endeavours to mend those who are come to Age, are generally to little purpose, but what they do for Children is of great benefit. If therefore they have a Zeal for God's Glory, and wish to see a change in the face of the Church, let 'em apply themselves to the instructing of Youth, and make it their business to form a new Generation.

Among the particular Establishments which might be made, for the edification of the Church and the benefit of young People, there is one would be of great use, and seems to be absolutely necessary; *viz.* That with relation to Children, who have attained the Age of discretion, the same order be observ'd for their admission to the Sacrament, as was practis'd in the Primitive Church, when Catechumens were to be receiv'd into the Church by Baptism. This admission was very solemn: A long Probation and Instruction went before it. The Catechumens were requir'd to give an account of their Faith, and they bound themselves by solemn Promises and Vows, to renounce the World,

Part II, and to live Holy! No such thing is done now in the Administration of Baptism, because young Children are baptized; but what is not done at the time of Baptism, should be done when they come to Years of discretion. And truly if there be not a publick and solemn Profession, a Promise in due form on the Childrens part, I do not see how we can well answer what is objected by some against Infant-Baptism, which yet is a good and laudable Practice. A Man cannot be oblig'd to profess the Christian Religion, against his will or without his knowledg: This engagement is a personal thing, in which every body should act and answer for himself. When Children are baptized, they know nothing of what is done to 'em; it is therefore absolutely necessary, that when they come to years of Reason, they should ratify and confirm the Engagements they came under by their Baptism, and become Members of the Church out of Knowledg and Choice. Now the fittest time for such a Confirmation and Promise, is when they are admitted to the Holy Sacrament.

The Order then which I mean is this: First, when Children desire to be admitted to the Sacrament, they should be instructed for some weeks before, and at the same time be informed of the sacredness and importance of this Action, and of the Promise they are to make, that so they might prepare for it betimes. In the next place, they should be

be

be examined, and publickly render an account of their Faith. This Examination being over, they should be requir'd to renew and confirm in a publick and solemn manner their baptismal Vow, to renounce the Devil and his Works, the World and the Pomp of it, the Flesh and its Lusts, and to promise that they will live and die in the Christian Faith: And then they should be admitted to the Communion by Benediction and Prayers.

Cause  
V.  
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It will no doubt, seem to some, that I am proposing a Novelty, and that too not very necessary; that there is no occasion for all this Solemnity; that it is enough to examine and exhort Children in private; and that this Confirmation of the baptismal Vow is included and supposed in the admission to the Sacrament. To this I say, that the Order I propose will be thought a Novelty by none but such as do not know what was antiently practised, and who call Innovation every thing, which agrees not with the Custom of their Country or their Church. This is an imitation of the Antient and the Apostolical Order; and besides, this Establishment being altogether suitable to the Nature of the Christian Religion, as I have made it appear, it ought not to be rejected.

As for what is said, That it is sufficient if Children are examin'd and admitted in private: I answer, That the Corruption of the Age we live in is so great, that in many Churches this Admission, and the Examina-



Part II. tion which precedes it, is but three or four  
 ~~~~~ hours Work, and sometimes less. Pastors,  
 and those to whom this Function is committed,  
 do often go about it very negligently; they  
 content themselves with some Questions, which  
 for the most part relate only to Doctrine and  
 Controversy; they address to Children general  
 exhortations to Piety, but take no care to in-  
 struct them in Morals, or to examine their  
 Conduct; they do not require an express  
 Ratification of the baptismal Vow. I know  
 there are Pastors who do their Duty, but the  
 best thing would be, to have this form of  
 Examination and Admission so regulated, that  
 it might not be in the Breast of every Minister  
 to do in this matter as he thinks fit. And that  
 all this might be done the more orderly, it  
 would be fitting that according to the Practice  
 of the Primitive Church, some Persons should  
 be appointed on purpose to instruct young  
 People and Catechumens. What care soever  
 may be taken of Children, and whatever may  
 be done for 'em in private Instructions, it is  
 certain that publick and solemn Exhortations  
 on the one hand, and Promises on the other,  
 would make a much greater Impression upon  
 them. They would then look upon their  
 Admission with Respect, they would remember  
 it all their Lives; and this Solemnity would  
 prove as useful and edifying to the whole  
 Church as it would be to young People. I  
 offer this with the greater Confidence, because  
 an Order like this has been settled

settled of late in some Churches, and is observ'd with extraordinary Success.



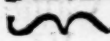
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C A U S E VI.

*Example and Custom.*

**T**H E R E is no doubt to be made, but that Birth, Education, and Imitation are three general Principles of the Irregularity of mens Conduct. The State in which they are born, gives 'em a byass towards Vice. Education, as has been shewn in the former Chapter, cherishes and maintains in most Men that vicious Inclination: But Custom and Example give the finishing stroke to mens Corruption, and make Vice reign in the World with a sovereign Sway. This third Principle is so general and powerful, that some have thought it the chief cause of Corruption; and that we cannot better explain how Sin is propagated and transmitted from the Parents to the Children, than by saying, that this happens thro Imitation. Indeed it cannot be denied, that Men are particularly drawn into Evil by Example and Custom. If this be not the primary or only Spring of Corruption, it is at least one of the principal Sources of it. And therefore I thought it proper to consider this matter here with some Attention.

All I am to say in this Chapter is founded on these two Suppositions. 1. That Men  
love

Part II.  love to act by imitation, and that Example is one of those things which have the greatest Force on their Minds. But when the Example is general, and supported by Custom and Multitude, they are yet more inclin'd to follow it. They not only conform to Custom, but think it besides just and lawful to do so. General Use is to them instead of a Law; by which they judg of what is innocent and forbidden. And that which yet more forcibly determines them to follow Example and the greater Numbers, is, that they think it a disgrace to do otherwise. So that the fear of Contempt, added to their Inclination, makes 'em perfect Slaves to Custom. If some remnant of Knowledg and Conscience does not suffer 'em to imagine there is no hurt in complying in all things with Custom, however they comfort themselves with the thought that the Evil they do is not very great, and that if they are not innocent, they are excusable at least, when they can plead Example and common Practice in their behalf.

I suppose, 2<sup>ly</sup>. That Example and Custom are bad for the most part. This I think needs not be proved; and if it did, this whole Treatise might afford sufficient Proofs of it, since Ignorance, Prejudices, false Maxims, and all the other Causes of Corruption I have mention'd, are so many Dispositions, Sentiments and Practices, which are grown customary, and are establish'd by the most general Use.

But

But it is not so needful to prove that the Cause multitude of ill Examples is very great, and VI. that Custom is generally vicious, as to shew, that under the shelter of Example and Custom, Corruption is still spreading farther in the World and in the Church.

In order to this, I shall consider the Power of Custom and Example in these three respects; with relation, 1. To Matters of Faith. 2. To the Order of the Church. And, 3. To Manners. What I am to say on these three Heads, will discover the Source of those three great Imperfections observ'd in the Christian Church, I mean Error, want of Order, and the bad Life of Christians.

1. Matters of Faith should not be subjected to the Tyranny of Custom. Religion depends not upon mens Fancies and Opinions: The Truths of it are eternal; it is founded on an immutable Principle, and is not more liable to change than God, who is the Author of it. And yet we see too frequently, that in Religion as well as in worldly Affairs, Example is more prevalent than either Reason, Justice or Truth. Men scarce ever examine things in their own nature, but Custom is the Rule of their Faith and Sentiments; by this Rule they determine what is true or false, what they are to believe or to reject: And this Prejudice is so strong, and Men have carry'd it so far, that Multitude and Custom are look'd on as a Proof and Character whereby Christians are to distinguish Truth from Error, and to judg what  
side



**Part II.** side they are to chuse in matters of Religion.

What is the reason why so many People do not perceive that certain Doctrines are palpable Errors and monstrous Tenets? We wonder how 'tis possible, in so learned and refin'd an Age as this, that the grossest Fables and Extravagances should still go down with Men of Parts for Divine Truths and adorable Mysteries. Time will come, when Posterity will hardly believe that ever such Opinions were receiv'd, or that Men did in earnest dispute for or against such or such a Tenet. It is only the Prejudice of Example and Multitude which blinds Men at this day; they have been nurs'd up and educated in those Persuasions; they see them obtaining among numerous Societies, and that is the occasion of their Obstinacy in Error.

Nothing but this Inclination to follow Custom, keeps up in the Church those Disputes which rend it into so many different Sects. The Principle and Design of most Disputes is no other, but that Men will maintain at any rate the Sentiments of their Party; and by this means those who are in Error, instead of being undeceiv'd, are more and more confirm'd in it. Every one swallows, without chewing, all that is profess'd in the Society or Communion in which he lives, and condemns without examination the Opinions maintain'd by small Numbers, or by Persons of another Country or Society. Those who are prepossess'd do not so much as make it a Question, whether they may not be mistak-

en,

en, and whether the Truth may not be on the other side. It is in vain to alledg to such People the most invincible Reasons, to urge exprefs Declarations of Scripture, or offer unanswerable Objections; for either they do not attend to all this, or if they examine those Reasons and Objections, it is with a Mind full of Prejudices, and resolv'd beforehand to think 'em frivolous, and not to alter their Sentiments. They satisfy themselves with some sorry Argument, or wretched Answer. If any Scruples and Difficulties remain, they shake 'em off in a trice, and set their Conscience at rest with this consideration, that they follow the common Opinion; they make no doubt they are safe, as long as they side with the greater Number. Besides, the Advantages of the World, which may be obtain'd by adhering to the general Opinion, would fully determine 'em, if not determin'd before; and they easily persuade themselves, that their spiritual Welfare, and the Truth, are to be found in that Party, which agrees best with their Temporal Interest.

2. Custom is likewise the chief Obstacle to the restoring of Order in the Church. I could here make a long Article, if I would mention all the Defects which may be observ'd in the State of the Church and of Religion, with relation to Order. But having done it in the beginning of this second Part, I shall only say in general, that nothing contributes so much to the maintaining of Disorder as Custom. The most beneficial Laws  
and

**Part II.** and Institutions are look'd on as dangerous Innovations, when not authoriz'd by Practice: Men dare not so much as attempt to introduce 'em. On the other hand, useless or ill Practices are thought sacred Establishments, as soon as confirm'd by Time and Custom. If Men do but endeavour to lay aside some Ceremony, to make some alteration in a Liturgy, or in the Form of Divine Service; it seems to many, that the very essence of Religion is struck at. Thus it happens, that Abuses, which are palpable, and acknowledg'd by all Men of Sense, subsist for whole Ages, and cannot be reform'd.

The difficulty of reviving the Apostolical Discipline, and of restoring Church-Government, and the Ministry of Pastors, to the State they ought to be in, proceeds from the same Cause. Because a certain Form of Ecclesiastical Government and Discipline obtains in a Country, it is pretended to be the best and most perfect, in which nothing is to be alter'd; and those are not so much as heard who propose the establishing of another. If any one thinks it a fault to suffer scandalous Sinners in the Bosom of the Church; if he thinks they ought to be excommunicated, and that Christians ought to maintain no familiar Intercourse with 'em; tho such a Man has the Laws of the Apostles on his side, yet he shall be call'd an Innovator. Tho he should plainly shew the Inconveniences of the ordinary Practice, and the necessity of Discipline from Scripture,  
from

from the Pattern of the first Christian Ages, Cause  
and by the most convincing Arguments ; VI.  
yet Custom will be urg'd against him, the  
Divine Laws shall give place to common U-  
sage, and the present Practice prevail above  
that of the Primitive Christians.

III. Example and Custom have a great force, especially in those things which concern Manners. Men are not altogether such slaves to Custom in matters of Opinion about Religion, because Opinions are shut up within the Heart ; but in practical things, and in Manners, there are few who are not carry'd away by the Stream of the Multitude. People think themselves excus'd from the Observation of the plainest and most sacred Duties, as soon as they cannot observe 'em without departing from Custom ; and so they conform to the common Use, how bad soever it may be. Those who condemn the vicious and corrupt Manners of the Age, and practise the Rules of the Gospel ; who for instance abstain from Swearing, and reprove those who do it ; who make scruple of Lying, and of transgressing the Rules of their Duty, are look'd upon as humourfom, and stigmatiz'd with odious Names and Imputations. If they plead the express Commands of Christ and his Apostles, instead of giving up the Cause, Men will strain the Scripture, and by forc'd Explications and impious Glosses, endeavour to fix a Sense upon it which may favour the ordinary Practice. While Piety dares not shew it self, Vice is respected ;



Part II. ted; and bad Men carry it boldly every  
 ~~~~~ where, because the Numbers are of their side.  
 Maxims directly opposite to the Moral Pre-  
 cepts of our Saviour are not only receiv'd  
 and tolerated, but defended as innocent for  
 this single Reason, that the generality of  
 Men approve and practise 'em. This might  
 be confirm'd by innumerable Instances.

We can hardly imagine any thing more  
 contrary to the Precepts of the Gospel, than  
 that worldly Life which is led by many  
 Christians. They spend their whole time  
 in the Cares of the Body, in Idleness, Gam-  
 ing, Pleasures and Divertisements; they de-  
 ny themselves nothing; they make it their  
 study to live luxuriously, and to gratify  
 themselves. This kind of Life is inconsis-  
 tent with Piety; but because it obtains a-  
 mong Persons of the higher Rank, it is very  
 hard to persuade those who follow it that  
 they ought to quit it. It is by alledging com-  
 mon Practice that Men defend a soft and ef-  
 feminate Life, Fashions contrary to Chastity  
 and Modesty, the too great familiarity of the  
 Young of both Sexes, the reading of ill Books,  
 the Plays which wound Honesty and Reli-  
 gion, scandalous Diversions, and those As-  
 semblies where the most inticing Baits and  
 Allurements to Vice are to be met with, and  
 where the Minds of young People receive  
 the most dangerous Impressions: All these  
 things, I say, are defended by Custom.

So that when Luxury, and expensiveness  
 and state in Apparel, Eating or Furniture  
 are

are once establish'd, we endeavour in vain to bring Men to Christian Moderation, and to banish that Multitude of Scandals and Vices which must needs attend such kind of Excesses. Thus in some Nations, where Drunkenness is in vogue, it is in vain to oppose so vicious a Custom. In spite of all that can be said against Drunkenness and Intemperance, People are so far from parting with that Vice, that they fancy there is no sin in being drunk.

To put up no Injuries, to indulge Revenge, to be tender and nice on the Point of false Honour, to stick at nothing that can promote one's Fortune, to assume all Shapes, or disguise one's Sentiments, and to supplant others: All these are Maxims follow'd without scruple, because they are authoriz'd by Use, and by the false Opinions of Men. It would signify nothing to alledg to those, who are possess'd with such Sentiments, what the Gospel enjoins concerning Patience, forgiving of Injuries, Humility, Sincerity, Justice and Charity; such Morals will not be so much as hearken'd to, because these Matters are otherwise determin'd by Custom. By the same reason it is pretended, that in Offices, in Trade, in Arts, and in the various Professions of Life, every thing usually practis'd in those several Callings, may lawfully be done. Nay, even an Oath is not sufficient to undeceive People; most Men explain their Oaths, and regulate their Consciences by the Example of others; they use all the Methods

**Part II.** of Gain which Custom has introduc'd, without inquiring whether they are justifiable or not.

When I speak here of Custom and Example, I not only mean that which is establish'd by general Use, but that likewise which is authoriz'd by Men in Credit. The Quality of Persons produces the same effect that great Numbers do; one single Example has sometimes as much force as the united Examples of a Multitude. All that is done and approv'd of by Princes, great Men, Magistrates, and Persons of Quality, is a Law to a great many People. A small Number of considerable Persons, who join their endeavours to bring a Practice into fashion, is enough to make it in a little time generally follow'd, how bad soever it may be. This is so commonly seen, that I think it needless to give Instances of it.

I shall add three Considerations which deserve a very particular Attention; I have already touch'd them by the by, but will propose them more distinctly here.

1. That common Opinion, that it is necessary to embrace the Sentiments and Ways of Living receiv'd in the World, is that which makes Corruption spread and insinuate it self every where. Men make it a Law to themselves, and repute it honourable to comply with Custom. It is laid down for a Maxim, that we must live as others do, and accommodate our selves to the Fashions establish'd; and that it would make us ridiculous if in Behaviour and Manners we differ from the Age  
and

and the Place we live in. I do not absolutely reject this Maxim, because it is capable of a very good Sense. A Christian should not profess an unsociable Piety: He may lawfully observe certain Decencies, and comply to a certain degree with the Opinions and Manners of those he converses with; nay, he ought to do this for the Interest of Religion and Piety. But such a Compliance and such Regards become criminal, when they engage him to act against Duty and Conscience. If the Custom be bad, he ought to depart from it, and to do in spite of it, whatsoever God commands; he does not deserve the Name of a Christian, who has not the Courage to do this.

And yet few People are capable of this Resolution, the greatest part are overcome by the temptation of the Multitude; the regard they bear to the Example and Judgment of others, produces a false shame, which hinders 'em from doing their Duty, and prompts 'em to Evil, notwithstanding all the checks of Conscience. And nothing is so fatal and pernicious in the state of those who thus comply with Custom, as their becoming such habitual Slaves to it, that they are no more able to alter their Conduct. When a Man is once got into a certain Course of Life in the World, he pursues it, and is still engaging deeper into it, till at last he comes under a kind of impossibility of leaving it tho he would; because in order to that, he must break off those Ties and Engagements, which



Part II. he has been long contracting; he must withdraw from divers Companies, and enter quite upon another way of Living. Now it is very seldom, if ever, that People can resolve upon all this.

2. Even those who are well dispos'd are shaken by Example and Custom; I said something of this in the Chapter of false Shame. A great many are satisfy'd that the side of the multitude is not the best, and that the Manners of the Age do not agree with Religion: but they dare not swerve from Custom; the fear of being hated, reproach'd or despis'd, restrains them, and frequently extorts sinful Compliances from them.

I shall take notice to this purpose of what happens every day to young People, whom Parents have endeavour'd to breed up to Piety and good Manners. When they first go out of their Father's House, they are ashamed and afraid of doing ill things; Sin raises some kind of horror in them. With these Dispositions they lanch into the World, they are plac'd either in the Army or at Court; and there they do not find those Maxims of Piety practis'd which have been infus'd into 'em, but they have only ill Examples before their Eyes. They see there Persons, who have been recommended to 'em for Patterns, of whom they are to learn how to behave themselves, upon whom their Promotion and Fortunes depend, and who are reputed honest Men; they see such Persons, I say, living in a licentious manner. This at first

surprizes

surprizes and troubles em, their Conscience holds out for a while; but Example does insensibly lessen in 'em the Abhorrence of Vice, their good Dispositions soon vanish, and at last they swim with the Stream, they embolden themselves in ill things, and become finish'd Libertines. In like manner they suck in the Atheistical Sentiments, which commonly are in fashion among Persons of Quality. If they are but told, That Men of Wit and Quality do not believe a thing, or that they entertain any Opinion; that is enough to make 'em embrace that Opinion, and question the Truths of Religion.

3. In the last place, Men are apt to think, that if Custom does not justify, it at least excuses Vice; and that if they do amiss in following the general Practice, it is but a sin of Infirmary which God will not take notice of. This is the last refuge of a great many Persons; they will own, That mens Manners are much deprav'd, and that there is little of true Piety among them: but they will say, this is the fashion, this is the way of the World; and he cannot be very guilty, who does only what others do. Nay, several who are not Libertines, and who see what should be done for the good of the Church, and the promoting of Piety, fancy themselves under no Obligation to oppose Custom. Their excuse is, That it signifies nothing to strive against a torrent. So that sloth and timorousness together, magnifying the difficulties which their Imagination represents, they

**Part II.** make no efforts, but let things go on at the usual rate. While Custom corrupts and blinds some, it intimidates and discourages others: and thus Vice and Disorder are still taking deeper root.

Now two sorts of Remedies may be applied to this Cause of Corruption, to wit, particular and general Remedies.

The particular Remedies are those cautions which every one ought to use, to prevent his being seduced by Example and Custom. There are two principal means for a Man to keep himself free from this Seduction: the first is to avoid ill Examples as much as possible, to withdraw from those Conversations, and to abstain from those Employments which draw Men into Sin, and to chuse a kind of Life which may not engage us too far in the World; and on the contrary, to seek after good Examples, and to be conversant with vertuous Persons.

But as notwithstanding all these Circumpections, we cannot avoid being often tempted by ill Example, so we ought in the second place to fortify our selves against this Temptation, by strongly possessing our Minds with the Sentiments which Religion inspires. I have shewed \* elsewhere, what Judgment a Christian ought to make of Custom and Mens Opinion. It is evident, That God having set us a Law, by which

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\* See Part I. Cause III. Artic. II. 4, &c. Cause V. Artic. II. about the end.

he will judg us; and having given us the Cause  
 knowledg of that Law, and powerful En- VI.  
 couragements to make it the Rule of our  
 deportment; neither Example nor the Judg-  
 ment of the World, can any ways excuse us  
 from doing what God commands, or deliver  
 us from the Punishment which our Disobe-  
 dience deserves. They who have a greater  
 regard to Custom than to their Duty, are so  
 much the more inexcusable; because the  
 Gospel expressly forbids us to govern our  
 selves by the Practice or Example of the  
 Men of the World. St. Paul exhorts Chris-  
 tians, *Not to be conformed to this present* Rom. XII.  
*World, not to walk after the course of this* Eph. II.  
*World; not to follow other Mens way of living;* and IV.  
*to renounce the World, and the Lusts of it.* Tit. II.  
 Our Saviour enjoins his Disciples, *To avoid the* Mat. VII.  
*wide gate and the broad way of the multitude,* 13, 14.  
*and to strike into the narrow path which is*  
*walked in but by a few.* These are Reflecti-  
 ons, which every Man who believes the  
 Gospel, should frequently and seriously make,  
 and which should serve him for Remedies  
 against the Temptations arising from Ex-  
 ample and Custom.

There are other general Remedies, which  
 tend to lessen the number of bad Examples,  
 and to alter the Customs and Usages which  
 are contrary to the Christian Religion. For  
 tho it may seem, that to go about the abo-  
 lishing of what is establish'd by a general  
 Custom and long Use, is to attempt an im-  
 possibility; and tho we cannot expect that



Part II. this Cause of Corruption should be entirely removed, yet the Difficulty is not so great, but it might in some measure be overcome.

This we have reason to hope for, if First, those who know and love their Duty would discharge it with Courage, and if they did add to their Knowledge a Zeal supported by Prudence and Firmness. How great soever the degeneracy of Men may be, there is still something in Vertue, which attracts their Respect and Love. The endeavours of good Men against Vice, are always attended with some Success: If the benefit of their Exhortations and good Examples does not reach far, they may at least be useful to their Families and Acquaintance.

But something more is requisite to reform general Customs and Practices; and none can do this more easily and effectually than they who are raised above other Men, and are in publick Stations. I say therefore Secondly, That if Christian Princes and Magistrates would use their Authority to this end, and be exemplary themselves, the Corruption of the World would considerably abate, and bad Examples neither be so frequent nor so forcible as they are. It is in their power to banish the greatest part of those Customs which are commonly receiv'd, and to establish contrary ones. The Care and Example of Pastors are likewise a most efficacious Remedy. If they instructed Christians as they ought, if they oppos'd the Corruption of the Age with the pure  
 † Maxims

Maxims of the Gospel, if they set themselves against Abuses; if they endeavour'd in publick and private, to bring all those that err into the way of Truth; if they applied themselves to the instructing of Youth, and their Manners were edifying and exemplary, there is no doubt but they would soon stop the Current of Vices and Scandals. It should be their chief Care to oppose Abuses and ill Customs at first; because when they have once taken root, the Remedy is much more difficult. In fine, as Customs are establish'd by degrees, so they are not abolish'd all at once; and therefore they who do not succeed at first in so good a Design, ought not presently to be discouraged and to grow weary.

Cause  
VII.

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C A U S E VII.

B O O K S.

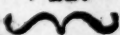
**T**HIS is the last Cause of Corruption I shall mention, but without question it is one of the most general and most remarkable. Books are as so many publick Fountains, from which vast numbers of Notions and Sentiments commonly received among Men, and which are the principles of their Actions, diffuse themselves into the World: And as it is impossible but among an infinity of Books, a great many must be bad; so it is certain, that Books contribute  
very

**Part II.** very much to the keeping up of Corruption. *W* If Men, as we have shew'd in the precedent Chapters, are ignorant and full of Prejudices; if they have loose and impious Notions concerning Religion; if great Defects are observable, both in the Lives of Christians and in the state of the Church in general; if the People are ill instructed, and Children are ill educated, the cause of all these Disorders is partly to be found in Books. It is therefore a most important Subject I am to handle in this Chapter, but it is likewise a very large one, by reason of the prodigious multitude of Books I have an opportunity to speak of here. But I must confine myself to what is most material upon this Head. I shall speak, 1. of ill Books; and 2. of Books of Religion.

The number of bad Books is infinite, and it would be hard to give a Catalogue of them; but I think, among all the sorts of ill Books none do more mischief than either those which lead to Irreligion and Impiety, or those which are impure and filthy. The first attack Faith, the other corrupt Manners.

1. The most dangerous of all Books are those which attack Religion; such are not only all the Books of Atheists and Deists, but likewise all those which tend to overthrow either the Authority of the Holy Scripture, or the Facts and Doctrines of Christianity, or the difference between Virtue and Vice, or any other Principle of Religion. I rank also here the Books which

intro-

introduce Scepticism, and the design of Cause  
which is, to render the Principles of Faith VII.  
or Morality uncertain and dubious. 

Those Books in which Impiety appears bare-fac'd, are not the most pernicious. Few Persons ever durst maintain Atheism openly, or deny directly the Fundamentals of Religion. And besides, avowed Atheists and Deists have not many Followers. Their Opinions raise horror, and a man's Mind is startled at them. But those Men, who tho they do not openly espouse the Cause of Impiety, pretending all the while to acknowledge the existence of a God and Religion; do yet shake the principal Truths of Faith: those Men, I say, diffuse a much more subtil and dangerous Poison; and this may be particularly said of the Scepticks. In the main they drive at the same thing with the Atheists; they assault Religion with the same Weapons, and make the same Objections. There is only this difference, that the Atheist decides the Question, and denies; whereas the Sceptick after he has muster'd up all the Objections of the Atheist, and started a thousand Scruples, leaves in some manner the Question undetermined: he only insinuates, that there is no solid Answer to those difficulties, and then concludes with a false Modesty, and tells us, he dares not embrace either side; and that which way soever a Man turns, he meets with nothing but Obscurity and Uncertainty: This differs little from Atheism, and naturally leads to Incredulity. It



**Part II.**

It is astonishing, that Books containing such pernicious Principles should have been published, and that Libertinism in Opinions about Religion, should grow up to that pitch at which we now see it. The Enemies of Christianity did never oppose it with so much Subtlety and with such vigorous Efforts, as some Christians do at this day. Some Books appear, which are only Collections of all the Objections of Heathens and Atheists against the Existence of God, against Providence, the Truth of sacred History, the Foundations of Morality, and many other important Heads; so that Impiety is now arriv'd at its greatest height. It might be more general, but we cannot imagine how it could rise higher.

And this occasions a very considerable Objection. It may be asked, how it came to pass that Incredulity and Scepticism should appear in so knowing an Age as this, and that Men of Parts and Learning should entertain such impious sentiments? It is necessary to dwell a little upon the examining of this difficulty, because it is so apt to perplex many. The Infidels urge it with great assurance, and pretend to infer from it, that Religion cannot stand a Philosophical and Learned Age, and that none but the Mob and the credulous part of Mankind believe it. They say that ignorant Ages were the most favourable times to Religion, that then every thing was believed; but that since Men have begun to examine matters a little more

more narrowly, they are become incredulous.

But any reasonable Man who does not love wrangling, may easily be satisfied on this Point. First, Infidels have no ground to suppose, that Men had more Faith in the ages of ignorance, than they have now; for this supposition is altogether false. There was but little Faith in those Ages; for we are not to call by the name of Faith, a silly Credulity, which made the grossest Impostures pass then current for certain, and even for Divine Truths. The Infidels do likewise suppose falsely, that the Learning of an Age more enlighten'd than the precedent, is prejudicial to Religion; for on the contrary it has done great Services to it. If some subtle Spirits have attackt it, a great many knowing and judicious Persons of extraordinary erudition and eminent worth have illustrated and proved the truth of it, with greater Solidity of Arguments, than ever was known before. This must be acknowledg'd to the Honour of God, and for the credit of the Christian Religion.

But it will be said, That those who make Objections against Religion, are learned; that they are Philosophical Men, who in all other things reason true, and can distinguish Truth from Error. Be it so; but then I ask those who urge this Objection, how it happens that we see every day Men of parts and sense, who yet will obstinately maintain palpable Errors, and refuse to yield to the Evidence of some Truths, which are as clear as  
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**Part II.** the Sun? To this nothing can be said, but that such Men are not so knowing as they should be, or do not make that use they ought of their Parts and Judgment. I confess, a Man must have some Parts and Subtilty, to be able to find difficulties every where: But he makes a wretched use of his Parts, when he only wrangles about the most certain Truths.

Those which the Infidels call strong Objections against the Truths of Faith, are mostly but vain Subtilties and mere flights of Wit, which may be used alike upon all sorts of Subjects. That we may be convinc'd of this, I shall only name some of those Truths or Matters of Fact, which are thought unquestionable, and which no Man, tho he wou'd, can doubt of. It is certain that the same Objections, by which the Infidels attack Religion, may be turn'd against such Truths or matters of Fact. The Subtilties of Scepticism may puzzle a Man, who shall maintain, that there was heretofore an Emperor at *Rome* called *Augustus*, or who shall believe with all Mankind that Parents ought to love their Children, and that it would be a sin to murder a poor Wretch who is begging an Alms; I say, a Man who maintains these Truths, may be hard put to it, before he can get rid of all the questions of a captious Sophister. But does it thence follow that this Man is mistaken? Is it to be imagin'd that a Man can really doubt whether there was ever at *Rome* an Emperor nam'd *Augustus*, or whether Pa-

rents ought to love their Children? Will any be so extravagant as to believe seriously, that it is indifferent whether we cut a poor man's Throat, or give him an Alms? The Subtilties of Arguments signify nothing against Facts well averred, or against those natural Sentiments common to all Mankind. Now Religion is founded upon Facts, and its Principles are in part natural Truths and Sentiments, which we must needs feel and believe at all times. He that would destroy Religion must confute those Facts and Sentiments, but Infidelity will never be able to do it.

Philosophical Knowledg is very much extoll'd by the Infidels; they pretend chiefly to a great exactness in Reasoning, and yet visibly run counter to right Reason, and transgress the Rules of true Philosophy. It is contrary to Reason, to judg a thing false or dubious, because there are some difficulties in it: it ought to be consider'd, that no Man knows all Things, or is able to answer all Objections; and that what seems obscure to one, will appear clear to another. When we have Reasons, on the other hand, to believe a thing true; when its Proofs are stronger and more numerous than its Difficulties; and when there are Proofs which on other occasions are sufficient to determine our Judgment, true Sense requires us to yield to such an Evidence. This Method is particularly to be follow'd, when the Matter in question is of some moment. In such things we are wont to govern our selves by  
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**Part II.** the greater Evidence, and to chuse the safer side. What can be therefore more irrational, than to hazard Eternity, and to question the Truth of Religion, on such Considerations as are of no weight with us, and would not stop us a minute in the ordinary Affairs of Life?

Further, it is contrary to the Rules of good Sense, to pass a judgment on those things of which we have no distinct Idea, or do not thorowly know. Men who can give no account of the Operations of their Souls, or of a hundred things they see, will yet talk at random about the manner in which God acts or foresees future events; about what God ought or ought not to have done for the orderly disposing of all things; about the ends which the Supreme Being proposes to himself, and the Means conducing to those Ends. This is the height of Extravagance and Temerity, and yet thus the Infidels reason.

I must add besides, that Men of Parts are subject to the same Passions with the Vulgar, and that those Passions hinder their discerning the Truth. These makers of Objections, who pretend to Politeness and Wit, are not generally sound at heart, but love Licentiousness; they are not addicted perhaps to a gross and shameful, but to a more refin'd Libertinism; they observe a little Decorum, but do not relish the Maxims of Devotion and Piety, and cannot endure to be ty'd to them. Vanity has likewise a great share in their Conduct. A great many imagine, that it is for their credit to distinguish themselves

from

from the Vulgar, and not to believe the Cause things which are believ'd by the People: VII. And when they have once embrac'd this way, and set up for Scepticks in the World, they think themselves bound in point of honour to maintain that Character.

Men of Knowledg are sometimes govern'd by many Prejudices, and false Motives. A preconceiv'd Notion, or a mere Circumstance is sufficient to determine them to the embracing of an Opinion. What has been said of the Conduct of Princes, may be apply'd to the Opinions and Hypotheses of the Learned. Wars, and such other great Events, upon which the Fate of Nations depends, and which make so much stir in the World, do not always proceed from wise and mature Deliberation; sometimes they are but the effect of a Passion, a Humour, or of some particular Circumstance. Thus it is with the Learned: We think too well of 'em, if we fancy they are always determin'd by the greater Weight of Reason; the Motives which prompt 'em to maintain certain Opinions, are often very slight. They are not sensible of this; they think themselves guided by Reason, and do not perceive the true Principle of their Actions or Judgments. If Infidels did strictly examine themselves, they would find perhaps that their Scruples were first rais'd, and have been maintain'd since either by some Book they read when they were young, by their Love for some Persons, or Aversion to others, by some ill treatment they have met

Part II. with, or by the Praises given them for their Wit; by some Prejudice conceiv'd against Religion in general, when they heard it ill defended; or against certain Tenets particular to the Society they live in, and manifestly absurd; or by some other Motion of this nature.

Lastly, If we call to mind what has been said in the beginning of this Treatise, to wit, That few Christians apply themselves sincerely to the study of the general Truths, and of the Principles of Faith; we shall not wonder that among so many, who never inquir'd into the Proofs of Religion, some should be inveigled by the Objections of Libertines, and fall into Infidelity.

I have in a manner stept out of my way; but this Digression is not impertinent, since these Considerations may serve as a Remedy against Incredulity and Scepticism, which some Authors would fain establish by their Writings.

One would think that every body should abhor those Impious Books, but yet they are read and liked by many. Young People especially, who mostly love Novelty, and are inclin'd to Vanity and Licentiousness, do easily imbibe the Principles scattered thro such Books: They are impos'd on by the Genteelness, the Wit, and some kind of Learning which they commonly find there: Being not well grounded in Religion, they are struck with the Reasonings of Infidels; the very first Objection puzzles 'em; they begin to doubt



doubt of many things, and soon become thorow-pac'd Scepticks. I leave any one to judg, what effects this may produce in an Age so prone to Vice as this, and if young People can avoid being corrupted, when no longer restrain'd by Religion and Conscience. There is no Condition more remediless, nor any State more deplorable, than when Incredulity is join'd with dissoluteness of Manners. People then are hardly to be reclaim'd; Age and ill Life fortify their Doubts and Scruples, and they continue in that State to their dying Day. This is the fruit which many reap from the reading of those pernicious Books; but it is not all the Mischief occasion'd by such Writings. They may fall into the hands of many who have no great compass of Knowledge, and beget several Scruples in the Minds even of good Men. After these Reflections, I make no doubt but it will be granted, that no Books are more dangerous than these, and that to have the Confidence to publish 'em, is a superlative Degree of Impiety.

II. The Books I have now spoken of assault Religion and Piety in general, and by consequence open a door to all manner of Disorders and Vices. There are others, which tho they do not attack the Principles of Faith, do yet introduce Licentiousness of Manners. It would be a long Work, if I should specify here their several sorts, which are as many as there are Vices, Passions, or receiv'd Errors among Men: This is a Detail I cannot enter into. Being then forc'd to stint my self, I



**Part II.** I shall only speak of impure Books: and I chuse this particular Species of ill Books, because their number is not only very great, but they are likewise such as do most generally corrupt Men.

Their Number is prodigious. 1. We have the obscene Books of the Heathens, which are not only read by Men, but are put likewise into the hands of Youth. Some People are so infatuated with these Books, that they fancy one cannot be a Master of the Greek or Latin, unless he has read all the Obscenities written in those two Languages; which is as extravagant, as if a Man should pretend, that whoever designs to acquire a thorow Knowledg of the French, or any other living Language, and to be able to speak and write elegantly in it, must read all the leud Poems and scandalous Books this Age has produc'd.

2. Besides impure Books of Pagan Authors, we have those that are writ by Christians. The World is over-run with Books of this stamp, their Number daily increases, and their amazing multitude is one of the strongest Proofs of the extreme Corruption of the Times. It is the last degree of Impudence to write in that Stile, and then to disperse it in the World by the Press. The Dissoluteness must needs be very great, when this is done so freely and so often as it is in this Age. Nothing can be imagin'd more lascivious or execrable than some Books which have been, and still are publish'd: Paganism never produc'd any thing more abominable on the Head of  
Impu-

Impurity, than several Works hatch'd in the very Bosom of Christianity; so that in this respect Christians have no cause to reproach Heathens. Cause VII. ~

These detestable Books are not the only impure ones, nor perhaps the more dangerous; vast Numbers of others are current in the World. What are so many Books of Love and Gallantry, so many scandalous Novels, either feign'd or true, and so many licentious Pieces of Poetry, but the productions of that Spirit of Impurity and Dissoluteness which prevails in this Age? Nay, even Books of Learning, which treat of serious Subjects, have a mixture of Impurity. This Infection is diffus'd thro all sorts of Books, and appears every day in some new shape.

As the number of impure Books is great, so their effect is most pernicious; and none ought to wonder I should assign these Books as one of the general Causes of Corruption. No bad Books are more generally read than these, none can with more reason be call'd publick Fountains of Vice and Dissoluteness. The Mischief they do cannot be imagin'd. They prove to an infinity of Persons, but especially to young People, Schools of Licentiousness. It is by the reading of 'em that Youth learn to know and to love Vice. That Age is prone to Pleasure, and to every thing that gratifies Sense; and that Inclination is so much the stronger, because it is cherish'd and fortify'd by an Education altogether sensual, and because young People for want of

Part II. good Instruction, have not much Piety, nor any great Aversion to Vice. From whence we may easily judg, That they are susceptible of those Passions which gratify Sensuality; and that it is hard for them to resist those Impressions, which the reading of impure Books conveys into their Minds. We see in fact, that Uncleanness is commonly the first Sin and the first Passion which seduces Men in their Youth, and which engages them into Vice, for their whole Life; for it seldom happens but that all the Ages of Life retain a spice of the Irregularities of Youth.

And yet for all that these Books have their Advocates. Many reckon, that there is no harm either in reading, or even in publishing them. If we believe some Authors, who infest the Publick with Books full of Obscenities; none but fantastical People, possess'd with a ridiculous and precise Devotion, find fault with those who write on this Subject. And in defence of their Opinion, they alledg this Maxim, *To the Pure all things are pure*; as if St. Paul, who does not allow Christians so much as to speak an undecent word, did permit them to read and write things contrary to Modesty, and which may occasion Scandal. From this Maxim they conclude, there is nothing in those Books that offends Modesty or Religion; and they protest, for their part, the reading of'em does not defile their Imagination. I do not know the particular frame of those Mens Hearts; perhaps impure Ideas and

Tit. I. 15.



and lascivious Objects are grown so familiar Cause  
to 'em, that they no longer perceive that VII.  
such Ideas and Objects make any impression  
upon them. But it is unconceivable how  
People can preserve a chaste Heart, when  
they delight in writing or reading filthy  
things. After all, tho the reading of such  
Works should have no ill effects on some  
Persons, there are a great many more who  
will make an ill use of 'em; and this is e-  
nough to make every man, who has any  
sense of Religion, to detest impure Books.

What I have now said will be granted by  
many; but it will be thought, that to rank  
Books of Love and Gallantry among impure  
Books, and to condemn the reading of 'em,  
is something too severe. I confess, all those  
Books are not equally bad, and some do not  
hurt Modesty so visibly as others do. But  
yet there are not many, in which a Spirit of  
Impurity and Licentiousness may not be ob-  
serv'd. That Love, which makes the Sub-  
ject of so many Books, is at bottom an im-  
pure and irregular Passion, of which the  
Gospel obliges us to stifle the very first mo-  
tions. What the World calls a mere In-  
trigue of Gallantry, is sometimes a pretty  
large step towards the Sin of Adultery. Sin  
indeed may be disguis'd in those Books un-  
der another Name, and may be dress'd in a  
modest Garb, but that makes it slide the more  
easily into the Mind. It is dangerous to  
dally with things, which deserve the utmost  
aversion of a Christian; and it is almost im-



Part II. possible but the Horror of Impurity, and of every thing that comes near it, must insensibly abate in any one addicted to such Readings. There are two Maxims in the Gospel which decide this Matter; the one is, *That we are to abstain from the appearance of evil*; the other, that in things indifferent, we ought to avoid whatever may prove a Scandal, or an occasion of falling to any body, especially when the Scandal may be foreseen. Now here is at least the appearance of Evil; it is certain that divers Persons will make an ill use of those Books, and by consequence the reading and publishing of 'em cannot be excus'd.

1 Theff.

V. 22.

See Rom.

XIV. 13.

1 Cor. X.

&c.

But as if it were not enough to maintain, that the Books in question may be read without Sin; it is pretended, that the reading of 'em is useful and necessary to open the Minds of young People. I do not deny but it is a valuable Quality to have quick and well-fashion'd Parts: but there are other Books which may be read without danger, and are much fitter to form the Minds and Judgments of young People, than Books of Gallantry; the reading of which, every body knows, has often spoil'd the Minds of those who were given to it. The greatest Mischief that attends this kind of reading, is, that it corrupts the Heart and sullies the Imagination, at the same time that it opens the Mind. Now it were better to have a little less of that fashionableness and politeness of Parts, which is so much esteem'd, than to

acquire

acquire it at the expence of one's Innocency. But some do not stop here. They proceed so far as to say, That these Books are useful even in reference to Religion, and are proper to restrain Youth from Vice; because we see in 'em the Follies and Misfortunes which irregular Passions betray Men into. I can hardly think this is alledg'd in earnest. It is a strange sort of Remedy against Impurity, to make agreeable Pictures of Love, and to represent minutely, and in a natural and insinuating manner, all the Motions which that Passion excites in those who are possess'd with it. We must be very ill acquainted with the Tempers of Men, and particularly of young People, if we can fancy that the reading of such Books will put 'em upon Moral Reflections, and inspire 'em with an Aversion to Vice. Daily Experience shews that nothing is more vain or false than such an Imagination.

It will be said, That at least those Books ought to be excepted, in which, among Love-Matters and licentious Subjects, the Reader meets with fine Moralities; which may however serve for a Preservative. But these Books are not much better than the others; nay, I cannot tell whether they are not more dangerous. Those Moralities are very ill plac'd, and few People are the better for 'em. It is a very suspicious kind of Morality, which comes from the Pen of those Authors, who write indifferently on Matters of Love, and religious Subjects; who

**Part II.** who sometimes seem to be Libertines, and sometimes devout; who after they have said a hundred licentious things, given you the History of a great many Disorders, and related several scandalous Passages, entertain you with Devotion and Piety: This is a monstrous Mixture. If those Authors were truly religious, they would forbear writing those things which Religion condemns, and which scandalize the Publick. Such Books are particularly fit to confirm worldly Men in their Opinion, that Gallantry, if it proceeds not to the highest degree of Crimes, is no great Sin; and to persuade young People they may easily grow devout hereafter, tho they now spend their Youth in Libertinism. From all these Considerations I infer, That let People say what they will, all the Books which present their Readers with Impurity, either bare-fac'd, or under some Veil, are extremely pernicious.

Having thus discours'd of ill Books, I come now to the Books of Religion. It may seem at first, that I should rather seek in these the Remedy, than the Cause of Corruption. Indeed the end of religious Books should be to banish Corruption, and to establish Piety in the World; and there are many of 'em which attack Ignorance and Vice with Success, and may prove excellent Preservatives against the Corruption of the Age. But I hope no body will take it amiss if I say, there are Books of Religion, which do not conduce much to the

pro-



promoting of Piety; nay, that some prove a Hindrance to it. *Cause VII.!*

This I shall now endeavour to shew. I shall not speak of any particular Book, but only offer some general Considerations, which my Readers may apply as they see cause. It is not my design to rank among bad Books all those Works, to which some of the following Reflections may be apply'd. Some indeed are downright bad; but many are in several respects good and useful, tho they have their Faults: and as good Books ought to be distinguish'd from bad, so it is no less necessary to discern what is good in every Book, from what is naught or useless.

The Books of Religion, which I think ought here to be taken notice of, are of four sorts. 1. Those which explain the Scripture. 2. The Books of Divinity. 3. Those of Morality. 4. Those of Devotion.

I. It cannot be deny'd but that among the Books of the first sort there are some very good, and that we have at this day great Helps for the understanding of the Holy Scripture. But it ought likewise to be granted, that some which are design'd for the expounding of Scripture, do only obscure and perplex the Sense of it. It would be tedious to mention here all the Defects of that kind, I shall therefore observe only the Principal.

1. The first and most essential is the not expounding Scripture according to its true Meaning; and this Fault, which is too frequent



**Part II.** *quent* in Commentaries, proceeds chiefly from two Causes: (1.) That Expositors do not apprehend the Scope of the Sacred Writers: and, (2.) That they enter with Prejudices upon the reading of Scripture.

The true way to understand the Scripture, is, to know the Scope of it, and never to swerve from that. Good Sense and Piety, join'd with the Study of Languages, History, and Antiquity, are here very serviceable. A Commentator ought in a manner to transport himself into those Places and Times in which the Sacred Authors liv'd. He should fancy himself in their Circumstances, and consider what their Design was, when they spoke or writ; what Persons they had to deal with, and what Notions, Knowledg or Customs did then obtain. But such as, being ignorant of these things, set about expounding the Scripture, can hardly do it with Success. It is a wonder if they do not miss the true Mark, and if they do not obtrude forc'd, and very often false Glosses on their Readers.

On the other hand, many Authors apply themselves to the examining of Scripture with a Mind full of Prejudices. They explain it by the present Notions of the World. Nothing is more usual, than to make the Faithful under the Old Testament speak as if they had been as well acquainted with the Truths of the Gospel as Christians are; and as if those Questions and Disputes, treated in Common-Places of Divinity, had been

been agitated at that time. When those Expositors, for instance, meet with the word *Righteous* or *Righteousness* in the *Psalms*, they fancy that *David* had in his Thoughts all that Divines have vented concerning Justification; and upon this Supposal, what do they not say, or what do they not make Preachers say? It has been observ'd, That almost all Commentators are partial, and endeavour to put upon the Scripture a Sense that favours the Opinions of their respective Sects. This Spirit of a Party is chiefly remarkable in some of those Commentaries which these last Centuries have produc'd.

2. The second Rule of a Commentator should be to expound clearly and familiarly the literal Sense of Scripture, and never to have recourse to a mystical Exposition, but in such Places as the Spirit of God directs us to look for it: And yet a great many Authors do almost intirely forsake the literal Sense, to pursue mystical Explications. In their Opinion, every thing is mystical, especially in the Old Testament. They are not contented with unfolding the true Mysteries and Prophecies manifestly relating to the Times of the Gospel, but they turn all things into Figure. They find Mysteries, Allegories, Types and Prophecies every where, even in the plainest Discourses. This they call searching and diving into the Scriptures. But this way of expounding the Word of God is a Fountain of Illusions: For as the Holy Ghost does not explain those

**Part II.** pretended Myſteries, ſo they muſt be put to their Gueſſes, and be beholden to their Imagination, for the Diſcovery of 'em; and he that is the moſt copious or lucky in his Conjectures, is the greateſt Man. Now I leave any one to judg, whether Commentators, who follow no other Guide but their Imagination, can avoid being very frequently miſtaken, and giving a great many Handles to Libertines and Infidels.

3. We are not to forget here the School-Commentators. The Holy Scripture ſhould be expounded in a ſimple and popular manner; and this cannot be deny'd, if we conſider it was given for the Inſtruction and Salvation of all Men, and that the Diſcourſes of Chriſt and his Apoſtles were addreſſ'd to the common People, and to ſuch as were far from being Philoſophers. Nothing therefore ſeems more repugnant to the Deſign of Scripture, than to explain it philoſophically, and, which is worſe, according to the Principles of a falſe Philoſophy, as divers Commentators do. They make uſe of the Method, Notions, and Terms of the Schools, to find out the Meaning of the Sacred Writings. They apply to all Subjects the Rules preſcrib'd by the School-men. They carefully diſtinguiſh in a Text thoſe Things which are call'd in the Schools *Materia*, *Forma*, *Cauſa efficiens*, *Finis*, *Subjeſtum*, *Adjunctum*, &c. They ſeek in all Reasonings the *Major*, the *Minor*, and the *Conclusion*; as if the Holy Ghoſt, inspiring the



the Sacred Authors, had follow'd the Cause Scheme of *Aristotle's* Logick, and intended VII. to make Syllogisms in Mood and Figure. I say nothing here of that Spirit of Dispute and Wrangling which runs thro the Scholastic Commentaries, nor of the false Senses and metaphysical Explications they put upon the Scripture. Such Books are Obstacles rather than Helps to the understanding of the Word of God; they are fit only to perplex what is clear, and to spoil Divines and Preachers, by taking away that Qualification they have most need of, I mean good Sense.

4. Another very different way from that Simplicity with which the Scripture should be handled, is the Method of those Authors, who without necessity insist on all the Circumstances of a Text, who list all the Terms of it, as if a Mystery lurk'd in every Word; who descend to the minutest Things, and weary themselves in Conjectures and Questions. This Exactness is very useless and insipid. It may be sometimes necessary to clear a Difficulty, to unfold an intricate Meaning, and to observe the critical Signification of Words: But when the Sense is natural and easy, and the Words are clear, to what purpose should a Man insist on all those Illustrations? What need is there to be always pressing the Signification of Words, to remark all their different Acceptations, and to explain what is to be understood by *Death*, *Faith*, *Just*, every time these Terms occur? The true Method is to



**Part II.** to pursue the Things themselves and the meaning of a Text, without criticizing on Words and Circumstances.


5. It is the Fault of many Commentators to be prolix. From every Verse, nay from every Word, they take occasion to run into a Common-place, and to vent a multitude of Notions; so that they really give us Sermons, Dissertations, or Lectures of Divinity, under the Title of Commentaries. I do not absolutely condemn diffus'd Commentaries; we meet sometimes with good things in 'em, but we find also a great many which signify nothing. When all is done, Brevity, Clearness, and Exactness, are infinitely to be prefer'd in a Commentary before Prolixity and Copiousness: Such Length breeds Obscurity and Confusion, it makes Preachers lazy; it tempts 'em to fill their Sermons with a hundred needless things; it brings 'em to a Custom of being tedious, of making Digressions, and of passing by what is essential and solid: All which is very far from promoting the Edification of the Church.

Besides, it is evident, That the Defects of Commentaries contribute very much to the Corruption of Christians. The Holy Scripture is the Foundation of Religion and Piety; but Commentaries are the Stores from which the Sense of Scripture is drawn, and from which Preachers commonly take the Matter of their Sermons. Few of 'em endeavour to find out the Sense of a Text by  
 their

their own Industry; they consult their Commentaries like Oracles, and blindly follow their Decisions: it is therefore highly requisite that these Books should not lead into Error those who have recourse to them. When a blind Man leads another, they both fall into the Ditch. If then the Guides, to whose Conduct Preachers give up themselves, are deceitful and false, the Word of God will neither be well understood, nor well preach'd, and both Preachers and People will err.

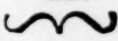
Cause  
VII.

II. It is with Divinity-Books as with Commentaries; some are good, and others bad. The diversity of Opinions we see among Authors, is a Proof of what I say: Some maintain as Divine Truths, Things which others reject as false and pernicious Sentiments; so that there must be no small Error on one side or the other. All Divines will own the Truth of this Remark; but it is here of no use, because it does not decide which Books of Divinity are good, and which are bad. Every body will pretend, that the bad Books are those which teach a Doctrine contrary to what obtains in the Society to which he belongs. In order to know who is in the Right, or in the Wrong, it would be necessary to judg here upon the Merits of the Cause, and to enter into the Examination of all the Controversies which divide Christians. But this I will by no means take upon me to do: It will be fitter to take notice of those Faults common to the

**Part II.**  greatest part of Divinity-Books. I shall say nothing but what must be own'd by all the sensible Divines of any Party; and the Reflections I am to make, tho' general, may perhaps be of some use to direct our Judgment concerning the Doctrine it self contain'd in those Books.

I. Almost all the Authors who have writ of Divinity, have made of it, upon the matter, a Science of mere Speculation. They establish certain Doctrines, they deliver their Opinions, they prove them as well as they can; they treat of Controversies, and confute their Adversaries: but they do not seem to have meditated much upon the Use of the Doctrines they teach, with relation to Piety and Salvation. They are very short upon this Head, which yet is the chiefest of all; they are not half so sollicitous to assert the Duties, as to maintain the Truths of Religion. Now this is not teaching Divinity. The Design of Religion is to teach Men how they ought to serve God, and to make them holy and happy. If this was consider'd in the handling of Divinity, and Care was taken to shew what relation all the Parts of Religion have to the Glory of God, and to the Holiness and Felicity of Man, there would be much more Piety among Christians. Those who study Divinity would learn betimes to direct it to its true End; and this would likewise be a means to distinguish material from insignificant Points and Questions, and to ease Religion of all those needless Disputes,

putes, which are one of the main Causes of Cause  
the Corruption of Christians. VII.

2. What I have now said leads to a second   
Observation, *viz.* That as several things  
might be left out of Divinity-Books, so other  
things are wanting, which it would be ne-  
cessary to add. For the purpose, Common-  
places do not insist much on the general  
Truths and Principles of Religion; they  
scarce give us any Instruction about Church-  
Discipline and Government, or about the  
Belief and Practice of the first Ages of Chri-  
stianity: As for Morality, it is touch'd very  
superficially. And yet these are essential Ar-  
ticles in Divinity, the Knowledg of which is  
necessary to those who are call'd to preach  
the Gospel, to guide a Church, or to direct  
Mens Consciences.

3. Divinity-Books are mostly too schola-  
stical. The Method of the School has been  
long in vogue; and tho the Schoolmens way  
of handling Divinity may be justly reckon'd  
a Defiance to Sense and Religion, yet it  
has so prevail'd, that for some Ages it was  
not lawful to swerve from it. Of late Years  
indeed the Schoolmen have lost much credit;  
and in Divinity, as well as in Philosophy,  
many Persons have no longer that blind De-  
ference for 'em which was paid heretofore:  
yet for all that, a great many Divines do still  
set up that Method for their Rule, and it is  
still as it were sacred in Colleges and Univer-  
sities. Common-places to this day favour  
too much of the Barbarism of the Schools,



Part II. and we find there but too many remainders of that dry and crabbed Theology, which had its birth in the Ages of Ignorance. Instead of those simple and clear Ideas, which render the Truth and Majesty of the Christian Religion sensible, which satisfy a man's Reason, and move his Heart, we meet with nothing in several Bodies of Divinity but metaphysical Notions, curious and needless Questions, Distinctions, and obscure Terms. In a word, we find there such intricate Theology, that the Apostles themselves, if they came into the World again, would not be able to understand it, without the help of a particular Revelation. This scholastick Divinity has done more mischief to Religion, than we are able to express. There is nothing has more corrupted the Purity of the Christian Religion, obscur'd Matters, multiply'd Controversies, disturb'd the Peace of the Church, or given rise to so many Heresies and Schisms. This is what confirms so many Ecclesiasticks in their Ignorance and Prejudices, and keeps them from applying to the solid Parts of Divinity, and to that which is proper to sanctify Men.

Now all these Defects are visible Causes of Corruption, which may be prov'd by this single Consideration, That it is in Common-places that Churchmen learn their Divinity. Suppose then that those Books do not give them a true Idea of Religion, what Religion or what Divinity can such Men teach their People? One scholastick and injudicious

cious Author, who is in credit in a Country, and is patroniz'd by a Professor, is enough to spoil the Minds of young Divines, and to bring into repute the most absurd and dangerous Opinions and Systems. Cause VII.

Tho Catechisms are not usually reckon'd among Divinity Books, yet it will not be useless to say something of 'em here. Some great Men have bestow'd their pains on Works of this kind to very good purpose, and yet in this respect there is still something to be desir'd for publick Edification.

1. It is to be wish'd that those Subjects should only be treated in Catechisms which ought to be handled there, and that all Matters and Questions above the reach of the People and of Children, or not necessary to Salvation, should be banish'd from thence.

2. That some essential Articles, about which Catechisms are very jejune, should be added, and particularly these Three: A general Idea of the History of the Bible; The main Proofs of the fundamental Truths of Religion; and An exact Explication of the Duties of Morality. This last Article is for

the most part neglected in Catechisms; nothing can be more dry and superficial than what they say upon the Decalogue. 3. It would be fit to make some alteration in the method observ'd in Catechisms; for they are not all familiar enough: School-Terms or figurative Phrases are us'd, which either the People do not understand, or to which they affix false Ideas. For instance, I wou'd

Part II. not have it said, *That the Eucharist is the Symbol of our spiritual Nourishment, and of our Union with Jesus Christ*; for, besides that this is not an exact Definition, this Stile is not proper for a Catechism. These words *Symbol, spiritual Nourishment, Union with Jesus Christ*, are figurative and obscure Terms. Would it not be plainer both to Children and to every body, to say, that the Eucharist is a sacred Action and Ceremony, wherein Christians eat Bread and drink Wine, which are distributed in remembrance of the Death of Christ, and of the Redemption wrought by him? In those Works intended for Youth and the common People, it concerns an Author to be clear and accurate, to omit nothing essential, to say nothing needless, to use plain and proper Expressions, and to propose nothing but what is natural, and easy to be apprehended. Catechisms are design'd to give Children the first Tinctures and Ideas of Religion: Now those Ideas, we know, commonly stick by 'em as long as they live; if then they are not clear and true, it is not possible for 'em ever to be well acquainted with their Religion.

III. The third sort of Books are those of Morality. This important Part of Religion, which regulates Manners, has been treated with a great deal of solidity and force in several excellent Works. Nay, it is observ'd, that Morality is more cultivated of late than it has been heretofore. But it were

were to be wish'd, that the good Books of Cause  
Morality we have at this day, were more VII.  
generally useful than they are. The best  
Works of this kind are above the Peoples Ca-  
pacity. There are various things in 'em,  
relating either to the reasoning Part, the  
turn of Thoughts, or the Stile, which can-  
not be understood but by knowing and dis-  
cerning Persons. Almost all who write well  
upon Morals have this Fault, That they  
speak too much like ingenious Men, and do  
not accommodate themselves enough to the  
capacity of the Readers. They do not con-  
sider that they ought to be useful to every  
body; that what seems clear to them, is  
obscure to the greatest part of those who pe-  
ruse their Writings; and that a Book of  
Morality, which is only understood by Men  
of Parts or Learning, is of a very limited  
Usefulness. They should therefore, at least  
in some of their Works, endeavour to speak  
in a popular manner, and to handle Matters  
with all possible clearness and simplicity.  
This wou'd be no disparagement to 'em;  
and the doing it well would, I think, require  
all the Abilities, Parts and Talents of the  
best Writers. It is more difficult than it  
seems to speak or write in such a manner,  
that a Man shall say all that is proper to be  
said, and at the same time be intelligible to  
all sorts of Persons.

But if there are good Books of Morality,  
there are many, on the other hand, which  
have considerable Faults, and those of great



Part II, Consequence, because Morality ill explain'd,  
 is capable of doing more hurt than good.

1. An Author, who treats of Morality, should always have these two Rules in his view. 1. To explain exactly the Nature of the Duties it prescribes. And, 2. to persuade Men to the practice of those Duties. Now these two Rules have not been sufficiently observ'd by all who have publish'd moral Books. (1.) They do not always represent with due exactness the Nature of Vice or Vertue. Either the Notions they give of 'em are not true, or they are too general. On the one hand, they are not accurate enough in describing the true Characters of each Vertue and Vice; and on the other, they do not distinguish their various Kinds and Degrees, which yet ought to be done, if they intend Men should know their own Pictures. (2.) They do not press Men enough to the Practice of Vertue. The End of Morality is to work upon Man's Heart and Passions. In order to compass this end two things are necessary. 1. That all those great Motives the Gospel affords, should be strongly urg'd: And, 2. That the false Reasons and Motives which engage Men to the Love of this World, and give 'em any Aversion to Holiness, should be confuted. Morals cannot be usefully handled without the observation of these two Maxims, the second especially; for the reason why many are not prevail'd on by the Arguments and Motives offer'd to them, is, because they are hinder'd

hinder'd by other Arguments and Motives. Cause  
A Reader frames a hundred Objections a- VII.  
gainst what he reads in a Book of Morality ;  
Man's Heart is no sooner inclin'd to any  
Vice, but it grows fertile in Evasions, Rea-  
sons and Pretences. Every Sinner has his  
Excuses and Shifts. If they who teach Mo-  
rality do not obviate those Objections, and  
destroy those Excuses, they can never ob-  
tain their Design : but this is a trouble  
which few Authors care to take.

2. Books of Morals would produce more  
fruit, if the Morality they teach was nei-  
ther too much relax'd, nor too severe. Mora-  
lity is relax'd, when it does not propose the  
Duties of a Christian Life in their full ex-  
tent, or does not assert the absolute necessity  
of the observation of those Duties. It is  
strain'd and too severe, when it imposes Du-  
ties which God has not commanded, or  
which cannot possibly be practis'd ; and  
when it ranks among Sins things which are  
innocent. I touch this only by the by, be-  
cause I have spoken already in some other  
Places of this Treatise, both of the remis-  
sion and oversevere Notions which Men form to  
themselves about Religion. See *Part I.*  
*Cause I. Art. II.* and *Cause II. Art. V, VI.* and  
*Part II. Cause III. Art. I.*

3. Some Authors who handle Morality  
are guilty of another Fault, and that is a  
want of accuracy and exactness in their I-  
deas and Reasonings. They do not consider  
enough, whether every thing they advance

is

**Part II.** is strictly solid and true, whether the Principles they lay down will hold, whether their Maxims are not stretch'd too far or absurd, whether they do not contradict themselves, or make use of frivolous Reasons; whether nothing is false or mean in the Motives they urge: In a word, whether their Works will be able to stand the Censure of a judicious Reader. Moralists, as well as the generality of Preachers, are a little too much carry'd away by the heat of their Imagination and Zeal, and do not reason enough. They often go about to move with rhetorical Figures, rather than by dint of Reason. This is a very ill Method. In matters of Morality it chiefly concerns a Man to speak and argue close; without this it is impossible he should either convince the Mind, or produce a solid and discerning Piety.

4. The World is full of Books of Morality, and yet there are several important Subjects which have not hitherto been treated as they ought; or if they have, it was in Works which are not read by the People. Those who study Morality are often sensible of this defect, and complain justly that they do not find in Books all the light and helps they look for. It is but of late that any thing has been writ with exactness in *French*, upon Restitution. Who can doubt but that a good Book concerning Impurity would be highly useful? This Sin is exceeding common, but it is one of those about which the People are the least instructed. If Christians

under-

understood the nature of this Vice, its Consequences, and the Duties of those who have fallen into it, they would certainly avoid it more carefully than they do. I might say the same of Injustice, of Swearing, and some other Subjects.

IV. I come in the last place to Books of Devotion; it is very necessary to make a right Choice of them, because of all the Books of Religion they are most read.

I. I cannot help saying, in the first place, that there are Books of Devotion which are capable of introducing Corruption of Manners, and diverting Christians from the study of Holiness. We may easily apprehend how there should be such Books, if we consider that many, even among Divines, think it dangerous to insist upon good Works, and to press Morality: And there are Books of Devotion made on purpose to maintain so strange an Opinion. Some Authors have taught, that true Devotion and solid Piety consists not in the Practice of good Works; they have writ, that the Doctrine which represents good Works as a necessary condition in order to Salvation, overthrows the Doctrine of Justification by Faith; that Works cannot be look'd on as the way to Heaven; that all we have to do under the Gospel-Covenant, is to accept of the Salvation purchas'd for us; and that the Gospel requires Works, only from the motives of Gratitude and Love. Nay, those Authors attempt to refute the Arguments drawn from the Exhortations,



**Part II.** hortations, Promises and Threatnings of Scripture, which are urg'd against them; and they tax with Pharisaism or Pelagianism those who are of a contrary Opinion. I cannot think the Authors of such Books did publish them with ill Intentions, but I could wish they had forbore writing things which give such mighty advantages to Libertines, and which may blast the fruit of all Books of Morality, and of all the Exhortations address'd to Sinners. And yet these Books are printed; and which is more surprizing, those Divines who are so rigid and scrupulous in point of Books and Sentiments, do not oppose the publishing of such Works, but suffer 'em quietly to pass current in the World.

2. The Books of mystical Devotion are likewise most dangerous; and their number is greater than we imagine. For to say nothing of those in which mystical and fanatical Principles are openly propos'd; many Works, which are otherwise full of good things, are tinctur'd with that Spirit of Fanaticism. I shall not here give the Character of those Books, nor shew the Mischief they may do in relation to Libertines, or to those who want either Knowledge or a discerning Judgment; because I will not repeat what I have said of Mystical Piety, Part I. Cause II. Art. VIII.

3. Some Authors, who have put out Books of Piety, have made it their whole business to administer Comfort. Those who read their Works, may easily see that they look'd upon the

the comfortable side of Religion, and that their principal design was to fill their Readers with Confidence, Hope and Joy. Without doubt it is a laudable and pious Design, to use one's endeavours to comfort the Afflicted, and particularly good Men; and I confess, we find in the Books compos'd with that view, many edifying things and noble Sentiments of Piety: but for all that, those Books may easily inspire Men with Security, when the Consolations they dispense, are not attended with great Circumspection and Prudence.

I could wish that all who have publish'd Books of this kind, had well consider'd these two following Truths. 1. That the Comforts Religion affords, belong only to true Christians; so that it is an essential part of the Duty of Comforters, carefully to distinguish Persons, and to mark clearly who have a right to religious Comforts. 2. That it is as necessary to sanctify, as it is to comfort Men; nay, that the sanctifying them is the more necessary, because Holiness is more essential to a good Man than Consolation and Joy; and also because Men are much more inclin'd to presume than to condemn themselves: besides, that there are but few who want Comfort, in comparison with those who ought to be terrify'd.

The Consolations of which the Books of Piety are full, are intended either for afflicted Persons, or for Sinners. As for the first, it is better to teach 'em how to make a good use of their Afflictions, and to bring 'em to examine

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**Part II.** mine and amend their Lives, than to discourse on some general Topick of Comfort, which perhaps will only lay 'em faster asleep in security; and is besides generally misapply'd. For all that the Gospel says of Afflictions is commonly laid together, and that with no great Judgment; and what is said only of the Afflictions of the Faithful, who suffer for Christ's sake, is apply'd to those common to all Mankind. 'Tis much better to teach Men how to die well, than to fortify them against the fear of Death. Nay, we cannot give 'em a more substantial Comfort, than to persuade them to live well, since a good Life will most certainly bring them to a happy Death.

But we ought to be particularly cautious when we comfort Sinners, and give 'em assurances of the Divine Mercy; for if this is not done with great circumspection, we may easily harden and ruin, at the same time that we are comforting them. This is the mischief of those Books, which speak but little of Repentance, and insist much upon Confidence; whose only design it is to encourage the greatest Sinners, and to exhort 'em to a bold reliance on God's Mercy, without fearing either the heinousness or the multitude of their Sins. Such Consolations are capable of a good Sense; but if not propos'd with due explication and restrictions, vast numbers of People will abuse 'em. What has been writ by some Authors in Books of Devotion, concerning Sin and good Works, is apt to lead Men into this fancy, that good Works signify no-

thing in order to Salvation, and that Sin does not obstruct it. Under pretence of answering the Accusations of the Devil and of the Law, these Authors enervate the strongest Arguments for the necessity of good Works; they confute the Declarations of Scripture concerning Sanctification, and destroy as much as in them lies, the Sincerity and Truth of the Precepts and Threatnings of the Gospel. For what they call the Accusations of the Devil and of the Law, is sometimes only the just apprehensions of a guilty Conscience which are inspir'd by the Gospel, and should be cherish'd to bring Sinners to Repentance, instead of being remov'd by ill-dispens'd Consolations.

It is said to this, that Sinners are not to be driven to Despair. But do we make Sinners desperate, by saying they are not in a State of Salvation, when really they are not? Do we not comfort them enough, when we exhort them to have recourse to God's Mercy, and to repent? What if we should by unseasonable Consolations, fill 'em with a vain and groundless Confidence? Would not that Security ruin them more certainly than Desperation? To make Men fearless, is the ready way to undo them. After all, I cannot imagine, why People should talk so much of Despair, and seem so hugely afraid of it. By the endeavours us'd in Books and Sermons to keep Sinners from it, one would think we had great reason to fear on that hand, and that nothing were more ordinary than to despair of the Divine Mercy; and yet there is nothing more unusual.

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**Part II.** unusual. For one Sinner who is terrify'd with his Sins, thousands are undone by Security. It is remarkable that the Scripture speaks seldom of Despair; and when we have well examin'd all the places thought to mention it, we shall not find many that speak positively of it. Many Church-men who have Cure of Souls, confess they never saw any Person afflicted with Despair. As for the Instances alledg'd to this purpose, it is certain that what is call'd Desperation, is commonly nothing else but a Fit of the Spleen, and an effect of Grief and Melancholy. So that those who make long Discourses to prevent Sinners falling into Despair, take great pains to little purpose, and for the most part fight with a shadow.

4. There is another Fault in some Books of Devotion quite contrary to this I have now observ'd, which is, that they terrify their Readers without reason. If Authors, otherwise pious and learned, had not spoke in their Writings of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, of Reprobation, Despair, the Power of the Devil, and some other matters, many People would have been free from those terrible Frights which the indiscreet handling of those Subjects threw them into. The reading of such Books has occasion'd, and does still produce great Mischiefs, when read by Men of weak Heads, inclin'd to Melancholy; and their Number is very considerable. Some have fancy'd they had committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost; and being possess'd with that dismal Thought, have spent their  
Lives

Lives in dreadful Apprehensions, of which nothing could cure them. Others have imagin'd, their Case was desperate, and that they were in a State of Reprobation and Damnation: Others have conceited, that they were given up to the Power of Satan; and have taken the Disorders of Imagination, for certain Signs of their being possess'd with an Evil Spirit. The worst of it is, such indiscreet Discourses are more apt to alarm good than wicked Men. In fine, I reckon among the Books that fright Men without Cause, all those which contain too rigid and austere Maxims of Devotion and Morality.

5. Piety would be better known, and more esteem'd, if Books of Devotion were always writ with Judgment and good Sense, and there was nothing in 'em but what, on a severe Examination, would appear strictly true. Those who set about Works of this nature, generally make it their Business to move the Heart, and to excite Sentiments of Piety. This is a good Design; but we ought to know, that it is the Force of Reasons, the Evidence of Proofs, the Greatness of the Objects propos'd, and the Clearness and Solidity of what a Man says, which truly affects the Heart. This is what judicious Authors chiefly mind, and thereby many have had good Success in those excellent Works they have enrich'd the Publick with: but other Writers do not consider this; they rather chuse to say tender and pathetical things, than to think or speak with exactness: They consult

Part II. Imagination more than good Sense; they pour out every thing, which in the heat of Meditation, or fervency of Zeal, seems proper to move, to melt, to comfort, or to terrify. Hence it is, there are weak places in their Books and Thoughts, which appear mean, and even false, to discerning Readers; Contradictions, and such like Defects. For on the one hand, they produce only a confus'd, and not a very rational Devotion, in those who read and relish them; and on the other, they expose Religion to the Flouts and Contempt of Libertines. We are often troubled and scandaliz'd, to find that some Men of Parts express but little Esteem for Books of Piety: We hear it said every day, that those Books are only good for Women, and for the Vulgar. This Contempt chiefly proceeds from a profane Humour, and Libertinism; but it springs likewise from the want of Exactness and Solidity observable in some Books of Devotion.

6. Divers Considerations might be offer'd about those Books which contain Forms of Prayer and Devotion; but I shall confine my self to these two, which appear the most material. 1. That those kinds of Forms make all sorts of Persons indifferently, and even good Men, say things which cannot agree but to the greatest and most notorious Sinners; which gives People this dangerous Notion, That all Men, even the Regenerate, are extremely corrupt. In divers Prayers we plainly see, that those who compos'd 'em

had

had no other Design than to draw the Picture of the most heinous Sinners, and that they suppos'd all men engag'd in a deep Corruption, and in the most criminal Disorders. Exaggerations and Hyperboles are so little spar'd by some on this Head, that they utter Absurdities and Falshoods in their Prayers; as when they say, that ever since we were born, we have been continually and every moment, offending God by Thoughts, Words, and Deeds.

I do not deny, but such Prayers may have their use, provided nothing be said that is extravagant, or contrary to Truth and common Sense; they fit great numbers of Persons: There are too many of those wretched Christians, who can never sufficiently bewail the Enormity of their Sins, and the Irregularities of their Conduct. I know besides, that all Men are Sinners, and that the best of 'em have reason to humble themselves in the sight of God, out of a sense of their own Weakness and Unworthiness. Nevertheless, since the Scripture makes a difference between good and bad Men, it is at least a great Imprudence to appoint the same Language for both, and to make 'em all speak as if they were guilty of the most horrid Crimes, and there was not one good Man in the World. This takes away the distinction between Sinners and the Righteous; for if these Prayers are proper for all sorts, if all that is said in them is true, 'tis vain to distinguish a good Man from a bad, and to



Part II. no purpose to pray to God for converting Grace, or to make any promise of Amendment. All those Lessons of Holiness the Gospel gives us, are but fine Ideas; all Men are upon the matter equally bad, and may all be the Objects of God's Mercy, how irregular soever their Deportment is. These are the Inferences which may be drawn from those Forms of Devotion I have mention'd, and which Sinners actually draw from them. From all I conclude; that in such Works it is necessary to distinguish *Persons* and *Conditions*; and this accordingly has been judiciously observ'd by some Authors.

The other Consideration relates to the Form of Prayers; these are not always plain enough. They are sometimes study'd Discourses, which have more of Art and Wit than of Affection. And we may easily discern how far most Prayers are remov'd from a due Simplicity, if we compare 'em with those contain'd in Holy Scripture, or with the antient way of praying receiv'd in the Church, and of which we may judg by the *Liturgies* now us'd, or which we have seen. Prayers then were neither so intricate, nor so long as they are now. Long Preambles were not us'd in the beginning of Prayers, and Men did not by so many Windings approach the Throne of Grace, to confess their Sins, and beg Pardon for them. Prayers were short, simple and natural, much fitter to excite Devotion, to lift up the Heart to God, and to nourish Piety and Zeal, than  
many

many Forms which obtain at this day.

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7. Of all the Books of Piety, none are more carefully read, and none perhaps have a greater Influence on the Conduct and Manners of Christians, than the Books of Preparation for the Holy Communion. The use of the Sacrament is one of the most important Acts of Religion, and one of the most efficacious means to promote Piety; and it is certain that the Books which People read, in order to prepare for that sacred Action, contribute much to the good or bad use of the Eucharist, and by consequence to the good or ill Life of Christians. Now what I have said of the other Books of Devotion, may be apply'd to these. Some Books of this kind are extraordinary good; but there are others, in which, among many good things, some Defects are observable, and particularly these three.

1. All the Books of Preparation for the Holy Communion are not instructive and solid enough. We find in some of them only a heap of Thoughts, which have no dependence on one another; Rhetorical Figures, Allegories, and Comparisons fetch'd from the Old Testament, or from profane History. These things may have their Use, they may be plac'd in a Sermon: But not to say, that sometimes those Thoughts and Comparisons are not very apposite or suitable to the Subject; I shall only observe, that something more is necessary to excite Devotion. I do only name this, because I have

Part II. given my Opinion at large concerning this Defect, in my three Reflections upon Books of Morality, and in the 5th upon Books of Devotion.

2. Other Books of Preparation are too general; as considering only the Duties of Christians in reference to the Communion, Self-Examination, Repentance, Faith and Charity: All which is of no great use to many gross and ignorant Christians, who neither know those Duties, nor how to perform 'em. Besides, all who come to the Sacrament are not in the same Condition, some being good, and others impious and hypocritical. There are likewise several degrees of good, as well as of hypocritical and ungodly Persons; and the same man may be better or worse at one time than at another: therefore it would be fit that Books of Preparation were so compos'd, that every Reader may be led into those Reflections suitable to the State he is in. It is a gross Error to imagine, that a general Preparation or Discourse about receiving the Sacrament, is proper for all sorts of Persons. I confess this is not the Fault of all those Books, some are particular enough. The true Characters by which every Man may know his own State, are exactly describ'd by some Authors; but it is a pity such Works are not better calculated for the common People.

3. I think I may safely say, that the too severe Notion which some Books give of the Communion, is one of the Causes why so many

many do neither live, nor receive the Sacrament as they ought. It is sad that the Minds of Christians should be fill'd with so many Scruples as to the Sacrament, by inconsiderate Discourses and over-strain'd Maxims: Writers and Preachers do sometimes speak, as if every thing in it was full of Snares, and Hell and Damnation were constantly waiting about it: They represent the Communion as so extraordinary, so difficult, and so dangerous an Action, that they who read or hear those Discourses are tempted to keep from it, and despair of partaking as they ought. So that whereas there should be nothing but Joy when the Eucharist is celebrated in the Church, many are agitated with extreme Perplexities and Terrors.

By this indiscreet Severity it happens, that many good Men receive the Sacrament without Comfort, because their Consciences are disturb'd with Scruples, which proceed from the reading of those Books. There are many pious Christians, who never receive the Sacrament but with strange apprehension and dread, insomuch that several think they receive it to their Condemnation. Nay, this discourages many Sinners, who have some Inclinations to Good, and desire to set about the Work of Repentance. Indeed we must take heed not to flatter Sinners in their Vices, nor propose to them too easy a Devotion and Morality. It is very fit, in my Judgment, to give 'em a great Idea of the Purity requir'd in so holy and solemn.



Part II. *lemn* an Action as the Communion, and of the State which a Christian ought then to be in. But as this State of Purity and Holiness is attain'd only by degrees; that Idea, how true soever it may be, is apt to fright a Sinner, in the beginning of his Conversion; because he finds not in himself at first all the Characters of true Repentance and sincere Regeneration. He ought therefore to be inform'd, that the beginnings of Repentance are weak, that it has its Degrees and its Progress; and so that he ought not to be dishearten'd; that God will accept of his Devotion and Endeavours, provided his Repentance go forward, and he forsake his Sins honestly. The Matter is over-done in point of Devotion and Morality, not only when we propose Rules too rigid, but when we say things, which tho true and consonant to the Gospel, are not accommodated to the State of those we speak to.

These are the chief Reflections I thought fit to bestow, both upon Books of Religion and bad Books. All that remains is to inquire, what Remedies are to be apply'd to the Cause of Corruption. The surest of all would be to exterminate all the ill Books, and to take care that none such be made for the future. But as this is not to be hop'd, the only Remedy which can be try'd, is on the one hand, to prevent as much as we can the Effect of bad Books; and on the other, to engage Men to read and to make a good use of good Books.

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The Books contrary to Religion and good Cause  
Manners may easily be known; but how to VII.  
keep Men from reading and being corrupted by 'em, is the Difficulty: probably this is a Point will never be intirely gain'd. Yet I think it not impossible to prevent in some measure the Mischief which those Books occasion. In order to this, it would be requisite, first, to take care, that young People might not read Books which inspire Libertinism. To this end the Authors who have writ repugnant to Modesty and Honesty, should be expel'd the Schools. It is surprising that the Ecclesiasticks, who have the direction of Academies and Colleges, and are bound by their Character to redress this Abuse, have not done it yet. Next it would be necessary, that in Families, Books that are apt to corrupt Youth should be taken away, and they should not be indulg'd in dangerous reading. As for the rest, I see no other Remedy, but that Preachers should strongly insist in their Sermons on the Reasons which ought to make Christians averse to the reading of ill Books. I know that all these Precautions will not wholly suppress those Books, nor prevent their being read by divers Persons; yet we may gain thus much, that ill Books shall not be so freely and commonly read as they are, and that they shall do less hurt.

As for Books of Religion, every one should endeavour to discern those which are good, and to make a good use of 'em. Indeed the  
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**Part II.** discerning and the choice of Books of Religion, is attended with some difficulty. The general Rule is to chuse what are instructive and edifying. Every body will own this to be a good Rule, but all do not agree in the Application of it. What seems edifying to some, appears quite otherwise to others. In point of Religion all Men should be of the same mind, since they are all bound to believe the same Truths, and practise the same Duties; but their Tastes are different, because many have a vitiated Palat.

To speak my mind on this Subject, I think that Christians should chiefly stick to those Books which prove the Truths of Religion, which establish by solid Arguments the fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith, and give a clear and exact View of the Duties of Morality: To these it may be useful to add the Works, in which we find the Examples of Persons eminent for their Piety and Vertue. Such Examples are efficacious to excite Men to the Practice of what is good, and prove a great Preservative against the Scandal occasion'd by bad Example, and against the Corruption of the Age. But not to enlarge further on the Choice of Books, I refer the Reader to what has been said in this Chapter.

A judicious Choice of Books being once made, the next thing is to make a good use of 'em. And here two Rules are to be observ'd. 1. To read with Judgment; And 2. To read in order to practise.

1. What

1. What Book soever we read, it is absolutely necessary to read it with Discretion and Judgment. We are commanded in Scripture, *To prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good; to try the Spirits and the Doctrines whether they are of God.* This Cause VII. *1 Thess. V. 21. 1 John IV. 1.* Caution is to be us'd lest we fall into Error, since every Author is a Man, and by consequence may be mistaken. The common People particularly need this Advice, because they are apt to believe, that whatever is read in Books, especially in Books of Devotion, is true. But tho a Book should contain only what is good; Discretion is necessary to make a just Application of the Contents of it to our selves, because what is proper for some is not suitable to others. The not observing this Rule is the Reason why some, who have a pure, but a timorous and short-sighted Conscience, are terrify'd without Cause, and apply to themselves what is said only of wicked Men; when on the other hand, hardned Sinners deceive themselves with vain hopes, by adapting to themselves, what relates only to good Men.

2. We ought to read, in order to practise, and that we may grow better: this is the more important Rule of the two, and distinguishes true from hypocritical Devotion. Many are regular and constant in Reading, and seldom fail to do it Mornings and Evenings. But the Deportment of those who are so assiduous in perusing good Books, is not always agreeable to the Rules of Devotion and



**Part II.** and Piety. When they are just come from their Reading, we find 'em often sour, peevish, and passionate: after they have read in the Morning, they spend the Day in Slandering, Gaming, or Idleness, and avoid only the grosser and more noisy Sins. There are Readers of another Character; they read, and even delight in reading Books of Religion: They like well enough those Works which prove the Truths of the Christian Religion, or treat of Morals; they speak of 'em advantageously, and will say fine things concerning the Abuses crept into Religion, and upon the Necessity and Beauty of Morals; but all this terminates only in a vain and fruitless Approbation, which they give to the Truths and Duties of the Gospel; for after all, they reform nothing in their Lives. Such Readings are but mere Amusements, and good for nothing but to rock Conscience into a dangerous Sleep. The end of Reading, as well as of Religion, ought to be the practice of Holiness.

I shall observe, lastly, that Christians have a Book sufficient to preserve 'em from the Danger of ill Books, and to secure 'em against the Corruption of the Age, if they us'd it as they ought; I mean the Holy Scripture: It is the best of Books, a Work divinely inspir'd, which contains nothing but what is most excellent and true, and wherein we find every thing necessary to instruct and to sanctify Men. But it were to be wish'd,

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1. That the Translations of Scripture, which are in the hands of the People, should be render'd more perfect, so that they might express the Sense of sacred Authors with all possible Exactness. All who have study'd the Original Text, will own, this is a necessary Work, and that the Translations need some Amendments: accordingly we see, that now and then Divines and Translators apply themselves to the correcting of 'em.

2. It would be to no purpose to have exact Translations of Scripture, if Men could not read it. I have already remark'd it, as a crying and shameful Abuse, that a great part of the Christians should not be able to read. This abuse should have been reform'd long ago, and might easily be done, if every Pastor endeavour'd it in his own Church, and the Magistrates lent a helping hand towards it.

3. The Holy Scripture should be read more than it is, and Men should make that use of it for which it was given. Other Books are only Streams; but when we read the Scripture, we drink at the very Fountain-head. Humane Books have their Faults, and therefore ought to be read with Discretion; but this Divine Book is most perfect, it is a Guide to whose Conduct we may give up our selves without fear or danger. This being certain, is it not strange that the best of Books should be most neglected? In many Countries the Bible is a Book unknown to the People: In other places the reading of  
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**Part II.** it is permitted, but with great Caution; as if it were dangerous to read a Book, by which God was pleas'd to reveal his Will to Men. In those places where Christians have an entire Liberty to read the Scripture, great multitudes make no advantage of that freedom. Many that are addicted to reading, leave the Word of God for other Books. In a word, very few read it with suitable Dispositions, and with a sincere Design of learning the Will of God, and of growing better by it. And thus the far greater part of Mankind is destitute of the most efficacious means and remedy, which the Divine Goodness has afforded, to preserve Men from the Contagion of Sin, and to make them happy; and so we need not wonder that the Corruption of Christians should be such, as has been represented in this Work.

*The Conclusion of this Treatise.*

**T**HIS is what I propos'd to say concerning the Causes of Corruption: I might have been larger on these matters, and have added many things I have not touch'd. This is a copious Field, and a Subject hardly to be exhausted; yet I think I have observ'd what is most material.

But it will be to little purpose to have detected the Causes of Corruption, if those Causes do still subsist; and therefore I conclude this Work with an earnest Intreaty to my Readers, That they will make serious Reflections upon it; and if they find in fact,

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Corruption proceeds from those Causes mention'd, that they will strive to remove them. Cause VII.

The Undertaking will, no doubt, appear difficult to many. They will own the Truth of what I have said, but will look upon the design of opposing the Corruption of the Age as vain and chimerical. They will say, all this is fine in the Theory, but the Practice of it is impossible. I confess here is some difficulty, yet I am persuaded, that what I have propos'd might successfully be done, at least in some respects.

But the general Causes of Corruption can scarce be remedy'd except by publick Persons. I therefore apply my self particularly to Divines, and to the Pastors of the Church; and conjure them to make it their serious business to discover and stop the Springs of Corruption. Let 'em turn all their Endeavours that way; let 'em labour to dispel the Ignorance and Prejudices so many Christians live in, and to confute those Maxims and Sentiments which feed Security and Libertinism; let 'em press with Zeal the restoring of Order and Discipline; let 'em incessantly lay before the People and the Magistrates, the necessity of redressing several Abuses now in vogue; let 'em inculcate these things with Zeal, but at the same time with Prudence and Charity; let 'em concert Measures among themselves; let them act unanimously in so noble a Design. Above all, let 'em take care to season young People with good Instruction, and inspire 'em with Sentiments of



**Part II.** of Religion and Vertue. These are the Solitudes which become the Ministers of Jesus Christ; these are Enterprizes worthy of their Character and their Zeal, and what ought chiefly to be consider'd in the Assemblies of the Clergy. But let 'em not be discourag'd by the Difficulties they are like to meet with. They will still gain something, even when they fancy they labour in vain. If they do not obtain all they desire, if they do not cure the whole Evil, they will remove at least some part of it. So holy an Enterprize will sooner or latter be fortunate in the Issue, and God will pour down a Blessing upon those Means which he himself has appointed.

One would think Providence is at work to bring about happier Times, and that things are tending that way. This is an Age of Knowledg, and Religion is now better prov'd and explain'd than ever. There is a considerable number of judicious and learned Divines, and Pastors, who are deeply griev'd to see the present face of Things, and are sensible how necessary it would be to oppose Corruption. So many Books, writ on purpose to revive true Christianity, and to bring Men to Holiness, seem to bode some blessed Revolution, and to argue a general Disposition towards it. God, who presides over all things, and particularly over that which concerns Religion, bless the Designs and Endeavours of all who have good Intentions, and grant we may quickly see Truth, Piety, Peace and Order, intirely restor'd among Christians.

F I N I S.

